

Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2021 – 2024



Our Vision

“We are ambitious for our district’s children and young people. Our vision is for children and young people to tell us they are happy, healthy and safe and thriving in communities where families and services work together to help them achieve their potential and dreams”.

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1. Foreword

Dear children, young people, parents, carers and colleagues

We are delighted to be able to launch our new Children in Care and Care Leaver's Strategy. This has been co-produced between our Build Our Futures Group, staff and partners who work most closely with our children in care and care leavers as well as key strategic leaders. It expresses our commitment to and ambitions for our Wakefield children in care and care leavers for whom we all carry a joint corporate parenting responsibility and who deserve the best from us to ensure we get the best from and for them.

We are very proud to be the corporate parents of our children in care and care leavers. We are impressed with their ambition, drive and determination when we meet them. Bringing up children is a team effort and we are pleased that the commitment expressed in our strategy bears testament to what everyone has committed to do to promote the very best outcomes for our children. Our Corporate Parenting Committee has an important job to do in holding us all to account to make sure we do not just promise, but deliver.

On that note, we commend the strategy to your reading, but more importantly to your actions to make sure we really help to jointly build the futures of our children in care and care leavers.



Cllr Margaret Isherwood

Portfolio Holder

**Children and Young People
Services**



Beate Wagner

Corporate Director

**Children and Young People
Services**

2. Vision, Pledge, Values and Context

Our Vision

“We are ambitious for our district’s children and young people. Our vision is for children and young people to tell us they are happy, healthy and safe and thriving in communities where families and services work together to help them achieve their potential and dreams”.



Children only have one childhood, so this strategy commits us to realise our vision for all children and young people and, as corporate parents, to achieve the best possible outcomes for all of our Children in Care and Care Leavers in Wakefield.

In developing this strategy, we acknowledge that a child or young person in care is more likely to be vulnerable and face increased challenges, compared to their peers, to achieve positive outcomes.

This strategy sets out the commitments of Wakefield Council, working with our partners, to continue to improve the outcomes for our Children in Care and Care Leavers. We are committed to ensuring every child or young person in care has the best possible start in life, experience safe and positive care and is given every opportunity to achieve their potential. For Care Leavers we will ensure that they have the best possible individual help and support so they are ambitious and make a successful transition to adulthood.

The priorities in this document reflect and build on our work from the previous ‘Children in Care Strategy 2018-21’ but more importantly what our children and young people and care leavers have told us is important to them now and going forward.

Our vision promotes our Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers; a promise given by the Council, with support from our partners, about the quality and nature of care that any child or young person can expect if they come into care. The Pledge was developed in consultation with young people, facilitated by the Participation Workers, Build our Future’s Youth Groups and the Children in Care Council who have told us how we can improve their experiences within the care system.

Our vision and priorities are shaped by our understanding of local needs and by national priorities. Our understanding of local needs and national priorities enables us to identify what our challenges are and will be, as we set out to achieve the best possible outcomes for all our Children in Care and Care Leavers.

Family finding for the right Adoptive Families and the recruitment and retention of Fostering Families are an example of the challenges we face in our commitment to improving the outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers. However, we are firmly committed to working with the Regional Adoption and our own Fostering Service to meet this challenge. In terms of our Sufficiency Strategy, in order to continue to meet this challenge, we have ongoing activity to include the Mockingbird project, Riverside project, Bespoke Recruitment and Residential Transformation plan to support family based care arrangements in which research tells us that these interventions promote improved outcomes for our children and young people.

The national and regional pressures can at times make finding the right placement for children challenging. Despite ongoing work internally and with the external market and a range of providers, sufficiency of local provision can still be limited, particularly for those children and young people with more complex needs. It is important that this strategy is, therefore, read in conjunction with our Sufficiency Strategy 2020 – 2022.

The scope of this strategy also positively acknowledges children and young people in care from other local authorities that come to live in Wakefield. In doing so, it also recognises that the availability of local provision is also affected by the number of other local authorities who have Children in Care placed in the Wakefield District.

The Local and National Context

The latest **national data** shows that across England, in year 2019/20, there were 80,080 children in care (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2019-to-2020>) The trend of year on year rises has continued over the last decade.

The national trend has been associated with a number of factors:

- Increasing severity/complexity of harm resulting in child protection processes being bypassed.
- Older children coming into care with increasingly complex needs, supported by the Children’s Commissioner’s Report.

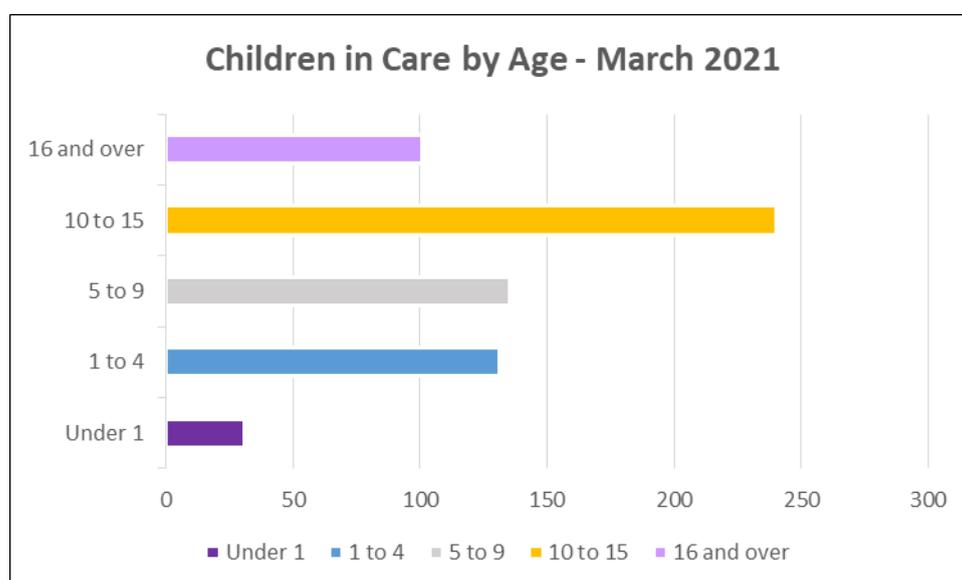
- An increase in numbers of unaccompanied child asylum seekers.
- Changes in guidance and regulations regarding Local Authority responsibilities towards homeless young people aged 16 and 17.
- Children remain in care longer, remaining with their foster carers on a staying put arrangement.
- Decreasing trend in number of adoptions continues to be seen nationally.

From DfE statistics, there has been a noticeable change in the legal status in recent years, with more children in care being subject to a care order rather than voluntary accommodation under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

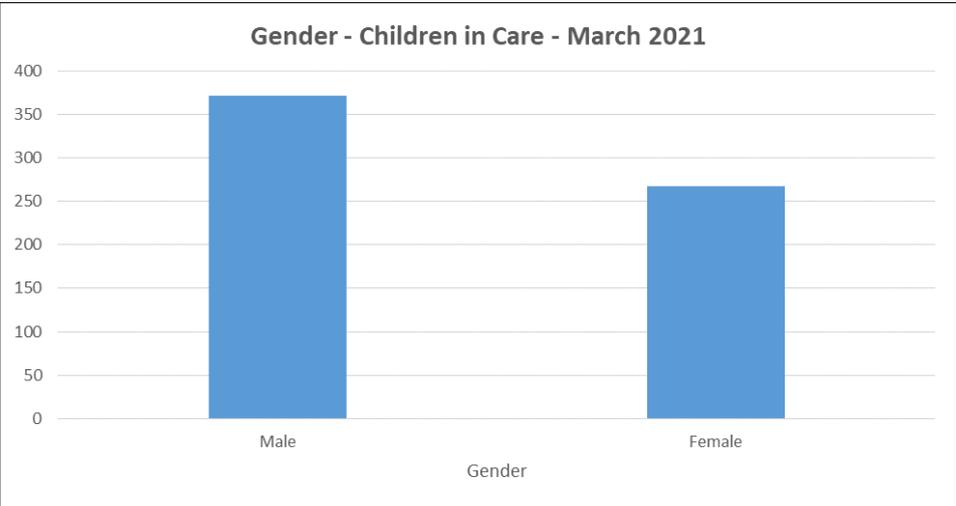
Local Context

From 2016 – 2020 Wakefield echoed the national picture in terms of rising children in care numbers experiencing a year on year increase in children in care during the period. Over the last 12 months, the number of children in care in Wakefield has remained fairly stable and as the end of March 2021, there were 638 children in care, which equated to a rate of 86.39 per 10,000 children, the same as the rate in 2020. This was higher than the 2020 national rate of 67 but much lower than the 2020 statistical neighbour rate of 104.2. Data is not yet available to determine whether an increase has continued to be seen nationally.

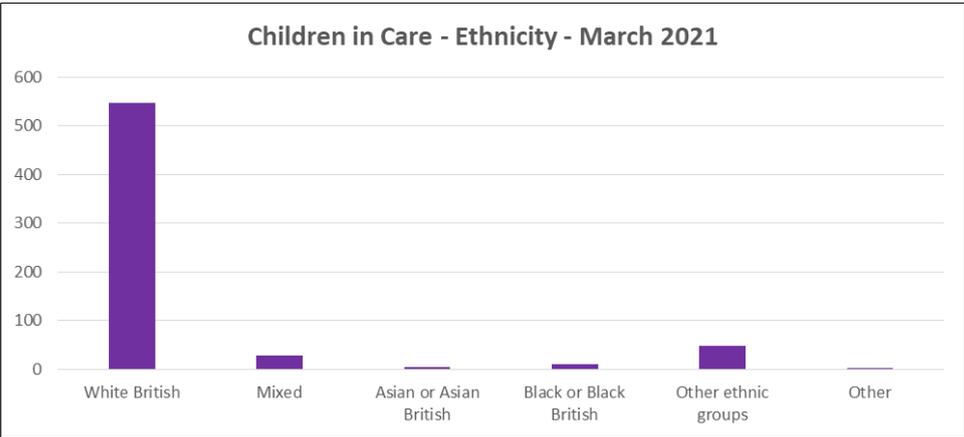
The tables below provide a breakdown of the ages of children in care as at March 2021 along with gender and ethnicity.



There is a high proportion of children in care aged 10 – 15 years with 38% in this group and 58% were boys.



The vast majority of children in care were white British.



Our strategy and plans take account of these national trends, with a focus through our sufficiency planning on securing enough of the right kinds of placements, and through our service development activity on ensuring the right kinds of additional support and help for children in care, to address the impact of harm where needed.

Wakefield's Pledge to Children in Care

The Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers driving our children and young people to achieve success.

Our Main Message to you is: -

- promise to involve you in decisions about your lives
- listen to your voices and experiences
- experts are those in care
- directing you towards the path to a positive future
- getting you the best – that includes, foster carers, social worker, placements and all that is offered while in care
- encourage and support you as we would our own children.

Our Values that underpin our vision for children in care and care leavers are:

Support Families to Stay Together

Early intervention and prevention plays a critical role in de-escalating family problems and keeping children in their family and community networks. This way we will ensure only those who really need to come into care do so and at the right time. Children tell us that they want Social Workers to inform them how they are striving to keep children with their families and they are kept up to date with information.

We have relaunched our Edge of Care Team as the Families Achieving Change Team and made a significant investment working with our partners in practice in North Yorkshire to support our children to remain or return safely to their families and communities with a well-researched evidence based intervention and approach.



Supporting Children into Family Settings

Whenever possible to minimise disruption for the children and people we will explore any family and friends as a care arrangement in exceptional circumstances. We support families to make arrangements to keep children safe in line with the no order principles, but where this is not possible look to statutory arrangements within the wider family and friend's network. It is usual that a child will be placed with siblings wherever possible unless it has been assessed that this is not appropriate.

Where family carers are not possible, Wakefield's own foster carers will be explored in the first instance to respond to the needs of children who are requiring to be booked into care. Where this is not possible, Independent Foster Care Agencies will be consulted. Residential placements will be used where the child's needs require a different kind of living arrangement, usually for a time limited period and with a view (where ever preferable) to transferring a child back to a more usual, family experience in his / her timescale.

Supporting Children to Live Locally Wherever Possible

We will strive to ensure that placements allow young people to remain close to their communities and networks where safe and appropriate. Out of area placements are a last resort that we will consider and only use when all other options locally have been explored, or there are individual reasons as to why this is necessary for some children or young people. We will then work with providers to ensure that support is available for the young person to maintain links to their home networks, as well as providing a regular oversight around the extent to which a child or young person should be helped to move back into the District, again in line with assessed need and his / her timescale.

Planning for Permanence

We are committed to ensuring that each child or young person has a plan to achieve permanence. Where ever possible, this will include physical, emotional and legal permanence, such that children move on to family carers, either within their birth family, broader kinship network, fostering family or through adoption.

Though we know that legal permanence (by way of parental responsibility) will not be achieved for every child who enters care in Wakefield, we are equally committed to achieving as much physical and emotional permanence for other children as possible, so that they have sustained relationships with carers / significant others who provide a commitment to supporting them both now and into the future.

We have put in place arrangements that help us to oversee the permanence planning for our children and young people, driving permanent outcomes from the earliest possible stage, including, through:

- Returns home to birth parents (where safe to do so);
- Care within the child's wider family or with friends (including with associated Child Arrangement or Special Guardianship orders);
- Fostering for adoption;

- Adoption;
- Long-term Fostering;
- Transition planning to independence for care leavers aged 16+.

Ensure Placements Deliver Positive Outcomes

We will work with children and young people, as well as other professionals, to ensure that placements meet the full range of the child or young person's needs and wishes, including education and health and they deliver positive outcomes and support transition into adulthood. We will do this with regular reviews and oversight and inclusion of the Local Authority's placements team to hold providers to account to maximise opportunities and promote positive outcomes.

We actively seek to minimise placement disruption and promote placement stability, recognising that this kind of change can be distressing for young people and can lead to poorer outcomes. We use "placement stability" processes to support young people at times when placement disruption might happen, and put in place a "team around the placement" drawing on the skills of our Emotional Wellbeing and Families Achieving Teams to help where needed.

Corporate Parenting

Throughout our strategy we aim to demonstrate our commitment to the seven corporate parenting principles as set out in The Children and Social Work Act 2017. They are:

- To act in the best interests and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of 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 to gain access to, and make the best use of services provided by the local authority and the organisations it works with.
- 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 to have stability in their home lives, relationships, education, or work
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living with an updated care leaver offer to young people who are preparing to leave care between the ages of 16 and 18, or who have left care and continue to require services between the ages of 16 and 25 years.



3. Contribution from Build our Futures Children in Care and Care Leavers groups

(The Children in Care Council, representing the voice of Wakefield children and young people in care, a voice and a choice for children and young people”).



We are the Build Our Futures Children in Care Council and 16+ Next Steps Forum. We represent the voice of children in care and care leavers in Wakefield. Our aim is to help Wakefield improve their experience.

We meet monthly in person and keep in touch regularly online. We have developed strong relationships with each other and our corporate parents. Building long lasting, honest and caring relationships helps us grow and develop.

We work closely with Wakefield Youth Voice Team's Build our Futures (BOF) groups. BOF is the umbrella term for the voice of children in Wakefield. Our members have helped to set up the Young People's Improvement Journey Group, the Anti-bullying group, the Emotional Wellbeing Groups, and the Build Our Futures Forum. One of our members has become a member of the Wakefield Young People Partnership Board. This means that children in care can help to find the solutions to problems that face all young people in Wakefield.

We work with Corporate Parents to make sure we continually develop services. We have developed activities and joint training with the Corporate Parenting Committee. We have a regular place on the committee where young people set and run the agenda, and we develop projects with the elected members of the council.

Some highlights of recent work:

- We delivered training to prospective foster carers, designated teachers, social workers, partners from the Wakefield Children and Young People's Partnership Board and other regional children in care councils
- We conducted interview panels for the Director of Safeguarding, Director of Education, the Virtual Head Teacher, Social Workers, Next Step Personal Advisors, Advanced Practitioners, and for roles in the pilot Mockingbird Fostering Team
- We updated, developed and made content for the new Care4Us.co.uk website making sure that better information is available at each step of the journey through care.
- We celebrated the Achievements of Children in Care at our Annual Awards Ceremony
- Made a "Call to Action" video about bullying and founded an anti-bullying group
- Delivered training to Leeds Beckett University first year Social Work Students

There are many ways you can make sure that the service you offer is making a difference:

Involve us early and let us lead the discussions. Working this way, and acting upon our wishes, will show that you are serious about learning from us. This will make us feel respected and valued.

If you work with us we need you to listen to our views, we need you to know what we want. Please don't guess or assume – ask us and trust us.

Listening is powerful. It helps us to think through the answers to our own questions. It creates a great environment to learn from each other – this is the way great things begin to happen!

Encourage children in care to download the Mind of My Own One App and you download the workers version. Mind of my Own gives us a chance to think things through and tell you our wishes in our own time and with less pressure.

Make sure we have access to the care4us.co.uk website. It's fun, it has lots of clear information, and it will help us understand our rights and responsibilities.

Stick with us: We need you to be someone we can count on.

Our aims for this year include:

- Improve emotional wellbeing for children in care, care leavers and all children and young people in Wakefield
- Work with One Adoption to improve letterbox contact
- Make sure that children in care and care leavers have all the information they need on their journey through care
- Update and improve the Care4Us Website
- Continue to interview professionals
- Keep in touch and support each other through activities and online meet-ups
- Plan and deliver a Children in Care Fun Day
- Deliver our Participation and Voices training to Educational Social Workers, the WYPPB and as mandatory training for newly qualified social workers
- Get more young people involved in participation through online activities and face to face meetings

We know you are busy and making our voice central to your decision making may seem difficult at times. Please plan ahead, be creative and use Mind of My Own and Care4us to help us express ourselves. Long term it will be worth it. Please use this strategy as a guide to the way you work and please let CICC and the 16+ Next Steps Forum know the good things you are doing.

The 'Build Our Futures' group are pivotal in helping Wakefield improve its services for children in care, leading on many key projects over the years, such as our contribution to this strategy.

We feel we are able to work with Corporate Parents to make sure we continually develop services. We have developed a new way of engaging with Corporate Parents, having a regular place on the committee where young people set and run the agenda and develop projects with elected members.

We are also in the process of developing an 'Improvement Group' in which four 'Build Our Futures' reps will be linking with the Corporate Director to tackle the following issues for improvement:

- Voice of the Child
- Children in Care Strategy and the new 'Local Offer for Care Leavers'
- CAMHS access / emotional health support for those in care / care leavers
- Development of Mockingbird and supported accommodation options.

4. Our Priorities for children in care and care leavers

1. Stay Safe
2. Stable Placements
3. Health and Well-being
4. Education and Enjoyment
5. Positive Contribution
6. Economic Stability and Well-Being
7. The Local Offer to Care Leavers



For each of our seven priorities, we have a view of where we want to be, which has been developed as a direct result of what children and young people told us and our Pledge to them.

Wakefield's Local Offer to care leavers has been developed together with children and young people from the Children in Care Council and the Leaving Care Forum. Feedback from recent surveys of children and young people who are in care have also informed the Local Offer. The Offer has been co-produced with our care leavers and key stakeholders and it provides young people with the information to enable them to understand their entitlements, access appropriate services and utilise any offers unique to care leavers.

Much of the delivery of this strategy is embedded in the way we work and is set out in operational delivery plans to ensure each promise is kept. However, some promises will require a more strategic and longer term approach, particularly where they are responding to local or national challenges and a changing legislative framework.

1. Stay Safe

What Children and Young People Told Us

- Children told us that, for them, feeling safe is about feeling that they belong in the home and the community where they live. Children said that spending more time with their social worker and planning and settling into where they live or go to school is what helps to make them feel safer and included in ways that their views are taken into account.

We will ensure that we know our children well by developing and keeping good relationships with them through social workers, carers, family members, teachers and others involved in their lives.

Through our direct work with children and their families we will ensure that we value their lives before they came into care and who or what is important to them about their history.

We will ensure that social workers work to our practice standards and that children feel able to tell us if they are unhappy about anything. Children are able to contact our Social Workers through the Mind of Our Own app.

We will make sure that through regular contact with children, including visits to see them at home, we actively involve them in any discussions, plans and decisions that affect them by being open and honest and by listening to their views.

We will work with our local police and families to keep children safe on the streets and work with schools to prevent bullying and stereotyping. When children and young people in our care go missing from their home or placement we will work hard with our partners to ensure that they are located at the earliest opportunity. We understand that when children and young people go missing this can be a symptom of their vulnerability and we will work alongside the young person to ensure that we support them to feel safe within their home and community.

2. Stable Placements

What Children and Young People Told Us

- Children told us that working closely with their social worker was the first important step in helping them to feel that their placement was a good match for them based on their needs and wishes. They also said that being open and honest about finding the right carers was equally important to them and that, wherever possible, involving them in any choice about their carers would be best.

We will work directly with children to involve them and understand their wishes and feelings about where they live.

Through positive relationships with social workers, foster carers and other carers we will ensure that children feel that they have been involved in deciding where they live and that they feel safe and cared about. Young people are instrumental in providing training to foster carers and Social Workers in respect of their roles and responsibilities.



We will respect the relationships that children have with siblings and other family members when finding the best place for them to live.

We will also ensure that wherever children live, we take into account their education and make sure that this is fully considered and discussed with them. We will continue to involve children in developing placement options through recruiting more foster carers and prospective adopters, as well as developing family based alternative care options for children and young people. Our children and young people are involved in the recruitment within this process.

We will ensure that placements are of good or better quality and that carers work with us to achieve permanence for children as well as good outcomes in all areas of their life. Families Achieving Change Team offer support and advice to assist in the longevity and placement stability for our children and young people where required. To support this the Local Authority have developed a process to track and provide advice to support placement stability which include conversations with all professionals involved with the child or young person.

We have introduced the Mockingbird Project to support placement stability, to alleviate the sense of isolation foster carers can feel and offers immediate practical support - similar to that a non-fostering family might receive from friends and relatives. It offers regular peer support, sleepovers, additional training opportunities, joint planning and social activities to support placement stability. Within the Mockingbird DFE Evaluation Report (September 2020), it identified, that stability was provided to children and young people.

3. Health and Well-being

What Children and Young People Told Us

- Children told us that working with social workers and other professionals about understanding their health and well-being needs is important to them. They also said that having access to people who can provide the right support and the right services available to meet their needs is equally important and that where services could be accessed in one place would be even better. They were particularly focused on having access to emotional and mental health support quickly and felt that equipping their carers, teachers and social workers with skills of increased awareness, support and confidence around emotional wellbeing would be helpful and less stigmatising.
- They said that if early strategies were in place to support them it may avoid the need to be referred for specialist mental health support through CAMHS.

Through our direct work with children we will know what they want and need to support them to be healthy. We will make sure that social workers, carers and other people supporting the child understand their health needs and that they work with them to access the right support. Every child and young person will have a health assessment so that we know what their needs are to provide timely intervention.

We will make sure that timely consent ensure that children have access to the right, good quality health care and services to meet their needs. This will respectfully take into account the child's history and what they tell us about their thoughts, wishes and feelings about their earlier life experiences.

We will ensure that children have access to healthy lifestyle choices including a range of leisure activities and emotional well-being support, including from social workers, foster carers and teachers. We recognise the importance of understanding the emotional needs and well-being of our children and young people and the impact this can have on relationships and placements. The local authority have a process in place to assess and review the emotional well-being of our children and can draw upon internal and external resources to review impact on them and their placement. We will continue to work with children to ensure that they remain healthy and that we take the relevant steps to adapt to any changes to their needs. Our children have set up an emotional wellbeing group along with our Build our Futures wider youth groups which enable them to talk directly with our health partners to shape the services and support to Children and Young People.

4. Education and Enjoyment

What Children and Young People Told Us

- Children told us that having positive experiences in school is really important to them. This includes Teacher awareness and sensitivity around care issues and for children to be feel included and to be treated like any other child in their school.

We have high aspirations for children and ensure that they are in good or better schools with support from people that understand and respect their care experience. We will also make sure that children have good quality personal education plans that are tailored to their unique and individual ambitions, needs and abilities. We will also ensure that children have access to the right resources and support to enable them to thrive in their educational attainment and prepare for life beyond school.

Through our work with schools we will make sure that children's education is not disrupted as a result of being in care, for example, by not holding reviews at times that impact on lessons. Wherever possible we will make sure that a child's school place is maintained. Care experienced young people work with the Virtual School to offer advice and training to designated teachers to ensure children's education is not disrupted.

We will ensure that children have access to leisure activities through school clubs and after school activities to promote their emotional well-being.

We recognise that each child is unique and so we will ensure that we celebrate their achievements in ways that are in keeping with their wishes and feeling



5. Positive Contribution

What Children and Young People Told Us

- Children told us that positive relationships with adults who get to know them and build their confidence in us is important to them in order to enable and support them to be more involved, both as individuals and groups. They also said that having their voices heard and acted upon, such as through the Build our Futures group, was equally important to them to show that they are listened to.

We will ensure that children are able to influence control of their lives, enable them to make a positive contribution to their day to day living and make their own informed choices about what they do, appropriate to their age and understanding.

Children will be central to developing new Care Plans and ensuring that each child is involved in the development of their own care planning using the Mind of My Own app. Plans will be reviewed with young people by Independent Reviewing Officers that advocate for positive outcomes being achieved.

We will encourage and support children to contribute and have a say in the future direction of service provision, including working together with 'Build our Futures', the Children in Care Council represent their views along with other children and young people in care. Children and Young People also have access to the Care4Us website to share their views.

Through our corporate parenting arrangements we will make sure that there are regular meetings between Leaders, senior managers and other people who make decisions, for example, through our work with 'Build our Futures'. Through this work we will review how we are meeting our commitments to children

6. Economic Stability and Well-Being

What Children and Young People Told Us

- Children told us that having access to financial support, including pocket money and other support for activities and holidays is important to them to enable them to feel equal to their peers.

We will make sure that social workers and carers offer children choices about what to do with pocket money and other resources to support their hobbies and access activities.

We want children to learn about money and so we will ensure that adults involved with children support them by helping them to have a bank account and / or savings account.

We will ensure that young people are supported by social workers to develop their Pathway Plans taking into account what they want or need to fulfil their potential. Through this we will make sure young people are able to access careers advice, guidance and support, including access to information relating to benefits.

The Care4Us website contains information regarding financial entitlement and what to expect in the transition to independence.

7. The Local Offer for Care Leavers

The Corporate Parenting Principles set out in Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the 'Local Offer' for care leavers and also the six priorities outlined above are included in the list of priorities for care leavers.

We will work closely with our Care Leavers to ensure they we constantly meet their needs and review our Local Offer to reflect any changes that may occur locally and in legislation so that it matches the needs of Care Leavers. We will do this by creating a culture where all professionals working with Care Leavers share our high aspirations and ensure that our Children Looked After and Care Leavers have all the opportunities we would give our own children through good access to high quality education, health and social care services.

Who are 'Care Leavers'?

A Care Leaver is someone who has spent time in the care of the Local Authority. The following young people, who are statutorily entitled to support, are part of this group:

- **Eligible** – children aged 16-17 who are still in care, and who have been in care for 13 weeks or more from the age of 14 and have been in care at some point when they were between the ages of 16 and 17.
- **Relevant** – children aged between 16 and 17 who have left care. This category of Care Leaver also includes children who are detained in institutions such as prisons or hospitals.
- **Former Relevant** – young people who are between the ages of 18 and 21 and who were previously eligible and/or relevant, and who are entitled to ongoing support to enable their successful transition to independence.
- **Qualifying** – A young person who has been a CLA for at least 24 hours, post his/her 16th birthday. Young people covered by the fact that they were being privately fostered or subject to a special guardianship order.

A young person who has had a number of planned short term breaks no longer than 4 weeks, and after each one they returned to their parents/or someone with parental responsibility. This will particularly apply to disabled young people who have regular periods of short-term breaks. Under the 2010 regulations this group is deemed to be qualifying

- Young people aged up to 25 and who were previously eligible and/or relevant, who are in education training or employment and who wish to receive an ongoing service.

- Young people aged 21-25 who are current or returning care leavers requesting a service under the Children & Social Work Act 2017 guidelines.

Means of Delivery - Personal Advisers

All care leavers are assigned a Personal Adviser when they turn 16 years old and can continue to receive support up until they are 25 years old. They review pathway plans (PWP) with individuals to ensure they are getting the right support, particularly in relation to financial entitlements and planning; support with accommodation and support accessing services such as health. Care leavers themselves are involved in co-producing the Care Leavers' Offer primarily through the Children in Care Council. Our young people have been integral to plans around the care leavers service and Care Leavers Local Offer.

Children in Care Council and 16+ Forum represents the views of care leavers. They meet monthly to discuss issues related to leaving care. Members of the group are keen to ensure that young people are supported through transition to adulthood. The group also runs an annual event for all care leavers in Wakefield.

Staying Put Policy

Our Staying Put Policy provides detail of the process to support young people to remain with their foster carers beyond 18 years of age where both the young person and foster carer would like the arrangement to continue. The Joint Housing Protocol in development with our housing colleagues will enable care leavers to move to social housing in a planned manner, avoiding the need to present as homeless. The protocol also ensures all care leavers are being placed on the relevant local authority housing register at age 16 or 17 supported by the Housing Home Search Team and Personal Advisors from the Next Steps team who will also track progress. Furthermore, both Housing colleagues and Personal Advisors will ensure that resources are available to support them in securing social housing accommodation.

Pledge to Care Leavers

The Pledge is our promise to all our young people leaving care in Wakefield. It is based on what young people leaving care have told us about their individual experiences and moving into adulthood.

Local Offer for Care Leavers

A comprehensive Care Leavers Local Offer, co-produced with our care leavers and following discussions with relevant stakeholders, has been launched. The comprehensive Local Offer provides young people with information to enable them to understand their entitlements, access appropriate services and utilise any offers unique to care leavers. The Local Offer includes information on:

- Housing and accommodation;
We will provide care leavers with suitable support, advice and guidance to manage both housekeeping and maintenance tasks. We will also provide continuous advice and support to enable them to maintain a stable tenancy.
- A full guide to available financial support and guidance on managing money
- Education, training and employment opportunities with links to schemes,

programmes and jobs

- Health and wellbeing including a comprehensive guide on the Health Service for Care Leavers, physical health, mental health, sexual health, young parents, smoking, drugs and alcohol and staying safe services
- Relationships with immediate and extended family, building appropriate relationships, relationships with professionals and developing a good support network including Staying Put arrangements.
- Participating and contributing in the wider community through volunteering, membership of groups and opportunities to influence and make services better
- Support available to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)
- How young people can have their say on their experience of our Children's Services.

Multi-Agency Working

Our aim is to work in partnership with other organisations to deliver holistic support to our care leavers, ensuring they are receiving the appropriate support for their individual needs. We will continue to work with partner agencies and support them in their roles to ensure that care leavers are able to achieve happy and fulfilling lives. Alongside our own Children's Services practitioners there is a dedicated team of multi-agency professionals all seeking to ensure that the needs of our care leavers are met.



5. Governance and Accountability

The responsibility for implementation of this strategy, and its ambition to improve outcomes rests with the multi-agency partnership for Children in Care, coordinated at an operational level by the CYPS Children in Care and Leaving Care Service.

A detailed annual implementation plan accompanies the strategy which, along with our partners, supports the delivery of the priorities set out in this strategy and it identifies key lead officers and various timeframes for the completion of all actions.

The implementation plan specifies an outcome for each action and references recognised national performance measures against which we will evidence the impact of our actions. The partnership will continue to evolve and develop to ensure the needs of Children in Care and Care Leavers are prioritised within all partner agencies and a joined up approach is adopted in identifying and providing services for Children in Care and Care Leavers. The implementation of this strategy and the work of the partnership will be reported to the CYPS Safeguarding and Family Support Senior Management Team and, in turn, the Directorate Management Team on a quarterly basis. .

Subsequently, the work of the multi-agency partnership will be reported to the Corporate Parenting Committee which also includes representatives from 'Build our Futures', the Children in Care Council.

Any work considered by the Corporate Parenting Committee, including this strategy, will also report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to demonstrate how satisfactory progress is being made across each of the outcome areas strengthening the governance of the multi-agency partnership.

Links to Key Documents

This strategy can be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers
- Sufficiency Strategy 2020 - 2022
- Wakefield Safeguarding Children's Board Business Plan
- Our Top 10 Tips
- Care Leavers Offer
- Sufficiency Strategy and Action
- Action Planning

