

# Education and Childrens Services

## SOCIAL CARE AND EARLY HELP

### Corporate Parenting, 16 plus and Leaving Care Strategy

**'As if this were our child'**

**2017**

#### **OUR MISSION:**

***'To improve children and young people's lives by working in partnership to raise aspirations, build achievement, and protect the most vulnerable'***

## **1. Introduction**

This strategy outlines the intentions of Leicester City Council in reference to improving outcomes for children/young people who are looked after by the Local Authority. As per the principles outlined in the Children Act 1989 and subsequent legislation and guidance, Leicester City Council and its partner agencies are premised on the belief that in most circumstances children/young people are best cared for within their own families.

There are some children/young people that for various reasons whom being in the care of Leicester City Council will be in their best interests. These children/young people must have services of the highest quality that does not disadvantage them in comparison to their peers, but seeks to amend the disadvantages that they may have already suffered prior to being in care. They must be given every opportunity and services that will facilitate them having the best possible outcomes.

As corporate parents in Leicester City Council, it is our responsibility to ensure that looked after children and care leavers get the best experiences in life, from excellent parenting which promotes good health, educational attainment, opportunities, development of talents and skills and an enjoyable childhood. This is the basis for a successful adult life. Stable placements, good health and support during transition are all essential elements, but children and young people will only achieve their potential through the ambition and high expectations of all those involved in their lives. Leicester City Council and its partners seeks to eliminate any and all obstacles/barriers that may exist in order to empower looked after children/young people and care leavers to achieve their full potential and be the best version of themselves possible.

## **2. Our Vision**

Our vision is that we will be a professional, dynamic and forward thinking service working with our partners to provide the best quality experiences for children/young people and care leavers supporting them to be safe, learn, achieve and grow.

We will ensure that the decision to place a child/young person into care is the right one and is made at the right time for that child/young person. Our children and young people will live in placements that are right for them. They will get the right support that they need when they need it and where they need it. Our looked after children/young people and care leavers will be fully supported to achieve to the best of their abilities. Our plans for care and permanency will be robust, timely and fit the individual needs of each child and young person.

## **3. Our Values**

Our values are to be confident; clear; respectful; fair and accountable. We hold these values in high regard and these are fundamental to the work we do and to all

those we engage with and are especially pertinent to our looked after children/young people and care leavers.

Our values for all looked after children and care leavers are embodied in the Children's Pledge 2016 and as corporate parents, we promise to support our children/young people and care leavers:

- To be fit and healthy
- To stay safe from harm
- To have a good education and enjoy their hobbies
- To help you prepare for your future
- To listen to you

#### **4. Overarching Principles**

Leicester City Council will improve the lives of children, young people and their families by working in partnership to raise aspirations, build achievement and protect the most vulnerable. At the heart the Leicester Corporate Parenting Strategy is the full participation, involvement and contribution of all looked after children and care leavers up to the age of 25.

Excellent Corporate Parenting requires ownership and leadership at a senior level, including elected members therefore, councillors and officers must have a clear understanding and awareness of the issues for Looked After Children and Care Leavers so that they can ensure that their responsibilities as Corporate Parents are reflected in all aspects of the work of the Council.

All services must have mechanisms in place to continually monitor and review the contribution they make to looked after children and care leavers. The Corporate Parenting Strategy is to be promoted and embodied across Leicester City Council at a Member, Council, Department, Service and Individual levels.

The corporate parenting commitment is measurable through the improvement in life chances and opportunities for Leicester City Council's looked after children and care leavers. These outcomes are reported to and quality assured by the Corporate Parenting Forum, Corporate Parenting Executive and the Children in Care Council.

#### **5. Our Priorities**

Leicester City children's improvement plan 2016 – 2018 sets our five strategic priorities for the service:

- Listening to and hearing children and young people
  - Listen to what we are told
  - Consult when developing plans
  - Use feedback to improve services
  - Actively involve children and young people in plans about them

- Knowing ourselves well
  - Know our communities
  - Benchmark against others
  - Use management information effectively
  - Measure impact
  - Use quality information and data
  - Communicate clearly and effectively
- Effective partnerships
  - Prioritise partnership solutions
  - Develop innovative ways of working
  - Commission jointly
- Committed, confident, competent workforce
  - Recognise the strength of a varied diverse workforce
  - Continue to develop high quality leadership and management
  - Invest in the workforce
  - Identify development pathways
  - Regular meaningful supervision and PDR
- Efficient and effective use of resources
  - Deliver services that meet statutory responsibilities
  - Deliver commissioning strategy
  - Transform services to meet need and show impact
  - Ensure access to good schools and childcare
  - Effective budget management

These priorities are valid for all children, young people and families that engage with our services and especially those that are in our care. Children/young people and especially those in our care are central to our improvement as a service and a council. We want to see them excel and overcome any identified barriers.

## **6. The Objectives of the Corporate Parenting 16 plus and Leaving Care Strategy**

Leicester City Council and its partners' responsibilities and duty to our looked after children/young people and care leavers are advocated for and regulated through government guidance and legislation. The Council has a strong and clear commitment to improve the outcomes for all children and young people in Leicester City. As Corporate Parents, we play a vital role in ensuring that the outcomes associated to looked after children/young people and care leavers are improved and in line with those children and young people not in our care.

The principle of 'as if this were my child' underpins this strategy and therefore the objectives of this strategy is to ensure that the whole Council and partner agencies work together towards ensuring better outcomes for looked after children/young people and care leavers. This can only be realised if all stakeholders work together in collaboration with a common purpose and ambition. This strategy is governed by the Corporate Parenting Forum and applies to all employees, service and departments and has the oversight of all elected members.

We aim to improve the outcomes for looked after children and young people by varied mechanisms, including:

- **Early Help**  
One of the best ways to deliver high quality services to children and young people in care is to ensure that we have the right children/young people in our care. These children/young people should be the ones that are most vulnerable and are at risk, while ensuring that we support those children and young people who can be supported at home with their families effectively and safely
- **A Strong and Consistent 'Front Door'**  
This is the part of children's social care services that provide the first contact and assessment of vulnerable children, young people and their families. By establishing and maintaining a strong and consistent front door, we are ensuring that the right services are being offered at the right time and to the right people. We ensure that only those children and young people that need to come into the care of Leicester City Council do so. This is a crucial starting point in the child/young person's journey. The Children's Social Care & Early Help (Duty & Advice Service) will ensure those children/young people who meet our threshold of intervention will be offered an assessment and the relevant and right service/provision.
- **Early Permanency**  
When we need to take a child/young person into care, we act quickly and decisively at an early stage in the child/young person's journey through the care system to facilitate and establish their security and consistency of care. We recognise and accept that permanency begins at the front door.
- **Offering the Right Support**  
Being in care can be a traumatic experience for a child/young person. We will offer the right support for our children/young people wherever they are placed and whoever they are placed with and in a timely manner.
- **Participation**  
The Leicester City Council Children's Pledge 2016 is fundamental to our participation strategy and as corporate parents, we are committed to this. We will engage with and listen to our children, young people and care leavers.
- **Data Management**  
Management and performance management are essential to informing evidence based decision-making. We ensure that regular performance data/reports inform any decision-making, as well as, regular reporting to the Lead Member for Children's Services on pertinent issues affecting looked after children and young people.
- **Sufficiency**  
To ensure that we care for our children and young people well, it is necessary that we have a good supply of high quality placements. Our Placement

Sufficiency Strategy clearly sets out how we will accomplish this in Leicester City.

▪ **Placement Stability**

We know that outcomes for children and young people are better when they are able to make positive long term relationships with their carers. We regularly review placement stability and see this as a key representation indicator.

▪ **Education**

Working with our virtual school, we are ensuring that the educational attainment for all our looked after children and young people are our highest priority and we aim to narrow the gap between the achievements for those in care of Leicester City Council and their peers that are not in care. We are committed to ensuring that all children and young people looked after by Leicester City Council are able to achieve their educational potential.

▪ **Health**

In partnership with our health services, we are ensuring that the health needs of our children and young people are identified and acted on in a timely and appropriate manner. It is our priority to achieve timely, effective, accessible and high quality service provision to improve health (physical and emotional/mental) outcomes for our looked after children and young people.

▪ **Leaving Care**

Leicester City Council recognises that young people who are leaving care need considerable support and guidance. We aim to begin this process early and gradually; always going at the pace of the young person and thus developing independence that is sustainable and meaningful for the young person.

Our priorities/objectives cover seven key areas and reflect the principle and the vision set out above. The key areas are:

- Safeguarding
- Health and Well-being
- Education, Employment and Training
- Accommodation
- Financial Support and Financial Confidence
- Participation
- Aspirations, Achievements and Celebrations.

## **7. Looked After Children and Care Leavers**

Children and young people who are 'Looked After' are the subject of a care order or an interim care order, children/young people accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 for more than 24 hours, subject to emergency protection orders where children/young people are accommodated by the Local Authority,

children/young people subject to Police Powers of Protection or arrested and at police request accommodated by the Local Authority. Children/young people in care also include those who are seeking asylum and those who receive regular series of short breaks.

A child/young person may become looked after for a short period of time, as a result of temporary issues while their parents receive the required support. A child/young person may also become looked after, as a result of abuse or neglect, or significantly challenging or offending behaviours.

The term “child” can refer to any child or young person between 0-18 years. The authority also has a duty and responsibility to those young people who leave their long term care after the age of 16 years until they reach the age of 21 years or up to the age of 25 if they are in higher education.

## **8. The Corporate Parenting Forum and the Children’s Pledge**

Leicester City Council commitment to our looked after children/young people and care leavers is overseen by the Corporate Parenting Forum. The Corporate Parenting Forum plays a vital role in ensuring that the Council is effectively discharging its duty, as corporate parents, to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children/young people and care leavers. To achieve this, elected members need to have a clear understanding and awareness of the Children’s Pledge they have made to looked after children/young people in Leicester City so that they can ensure that their responsibilities as corporate parents are reflected in all aspects of the work of the Council.

The Corporate Parenting Forum is responsible for facilitating the Council’s role as a corporate parent. They seek to ensure that the health; education and access to employment of children/young people in care is maximised; monitor the quality of care provided; and also ensure that children/young people leaving care have good and sustainable arrangements for their future.

These responsibilities are outlined within the Corporate Parenting Forum Terms of Reference:

- Ensuring children are provided with a safe and stable environment where they can develop positive and caring relationships with adults and children.
- Achieving the highest possible standard of education and attainment, wherever possible in mainstream schools.
- Ensuring that they are helped to be emotionally well and physically fit and healthy as possible.
- Understanding their needs and ensure they have realistic aspirations, self-determination, confidence and resilience to achieve what they want to achieve.

- Supporting and assist their transition to adulthood and promote their economic prospects.
- Ensuring children are consulted and influence decisions and plans that affect them individually.
- Ensuring that all requirements are met for Young People in Secure Remand or Young Detention Accommodation.

Leicester City Council's Children in Care Council are key partners in ensuring that the views, wishes and feelings of our looked after children/young people and care leavers are taken into account and represented when making service improvements.

Leicester City Council and the Children in Care Council have developed the Children's Pledge. The pledge provides clarity to looked after children/young people and care leavers about what they should expect from the Council and its partners as corporate parents.

The Corporate Parenting Forum has the responsibility of ensuring that we as a whole council are delivering the corporate parenting agenda and is made up of senior officers from the council and partners, elected members, looked after children and care leavers. The underlying principles of the Pledge are aimed at ensuring looked after children and young people are safe, healthy, happy, able to contribute to their local community, able to grow up in a stable environment, achieve and attain, have a voice and be best placed to reach their full potential as adults. The Pledge underpins the quality assurance reporting to the Corporate Parenting Forum and subsequent priorities.

## **9 Outcomes for Looked After Children and Care leavers**

Looked After Children/Young People and Care Leavers will:

- Be safe and feel safe
- Have good physical, emotional health and well-being
- Fulfil their educational potential
- Achieve permanency and stability
- Be supported through transition to adulthood
- Care Leavers will have meaningful employment
- Care Leavers will live in suitable accommodation
- Care Leavers will have financial support and financial confidence

At Leicester City Council, we are committed to our looked after children, young people and care leavers. We want to ensure that they are receive the right support at the right time to ensure that they have every opportunity to be safe, learn, achieve and grow.