

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022 - 2024



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Foreword and Introduction

Looking after the children and young people in our care (our children looked after) and providing the best possible support and opportunity to those who have left our care (our care leavers) are amongst the most important things we do as a council.

We are all the ‘corporate parents’ of these children, young people and young adults, with a collective responsibility to provide the best possible care and protection. We are the corporate parent and grandparent to over 800 children and young people looked after and over 300 care leavers. We are ambitious and have high aspirations for each and every one of them. As responsible parents we care deeply about our children and young people’s safety, health, their education and their leisure interests, their friendships and their futures.

Fundamentally, as for any other parent, we want our children and young people to be the happiest they can be.

In everything we do, we are guided by the question:

“Would this be good enough for my child, grandchild, niece or nephew?”

In the foreword to our previous strategy, we emphasised that good corporate parenting requires a high level of commitment from across the whole council and the support of all council employees and elected members as well as partner agencies. We described how the corporate parenting role had been strengthened and set out what we planned to do to further strengthen this. In this refresh of the strategy, we describe the progress we have made and what we plan to do next.

This refresh of our strategy is based on extensive consultation. This consultation has been with the people who matter most: the children and young people we look after and our care leavers. During 2021, 231 of our children and young people looked after and 151 of our care leavers told us what it feels like to be looked after and supported by us. They did this via ‘Bright Spots’ surveys administered by Coram Voice.

The findings of these surveys have given us rich intelligence about how we measure up against the promises we have made to our children and young people looked after and to our care leavers. Our children, young people and care leavers have also told us what we need to focus on most to improve their lives and experiences: the strategy describes what we are doing as a result of this feedback and what we plan to do next. We plan to run the surveys again during the first quarter of 2024, so that our children, young people and young adults can tell us if their lives have improved.

In addition, and with a clear link to the five priorities identified by our YVIC members, we have identified three key strategic priorities, all of which are critically important in helping all of our children looked after to be the happiest they can be: a continued focus on developing the range of high-quality care available locally in Hull; further developing how we understand and respond to the impact of trauma; and, ensuring that all of our children looked after attend school and have access to high-quality education that meets their needs.

Our children looked after, and our care leavers are helping us to improve and holding us to account. For care leavers, this is mostly coordinated through 'Room 42' and our reinvigorated care leavers' forum. Our children in care council, Young Voices Influencing Care (YVIC) have led on behalf of our children looked after. This has included the production of an inspirational animated film called 'Dream On' which premiered at the Guildhall in June 2022. [Dream On](#)

Our YVIC members are rightly proud of what they have produced, and we are immensely proud of them too. 'Dream On' tells the story in her own words of a girl who has woken up in care, because "*right now things are not good at home, and someone has had to step in*". The film challenges us to think differently about what care should be. It asks us to think differently, to try harder and to dream.

With their permission we have used some of the imagery and words from the film within this strategy. Waking up in a foster home and hoping that it's all been a dream, the young girl says:



"I make a promise to myself. That all the things I pretended to dream about can actually come true. I deserve them to come true. To see my family, to be safe, to have people who listen, to have someone to look after me, to learn in school, to have my mates around me, to have a future and a childhood. If we all believe that I deserve those things, it won't just be a dream"

We do passionately believe that all of our children and young people looked after deserve all of these things too and we are committed to working together across the whole council and partnership to ensure that they are the reality for our children and young people, and not just a dream.

<p>Pauline Turner Director of Children, Young People and Family Services</p>	<p>Councillor Linda Tock Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board and Portfolio Holder for Learning Skills and Safeguarding Children</p>	<p>Matt Jukes Chief Executive</p>

1. Leadership and Governance

We have continued to build upon and strengthen the ways in which we fulfil our responsibilities as corporate parents. The improvements made have led to better outcomes for our children looked after and our care leavers and to the continuous development and improvement of the services that are provided to help and support them meet their potential.

These improvements have been evident to our regulators from Ofsted:

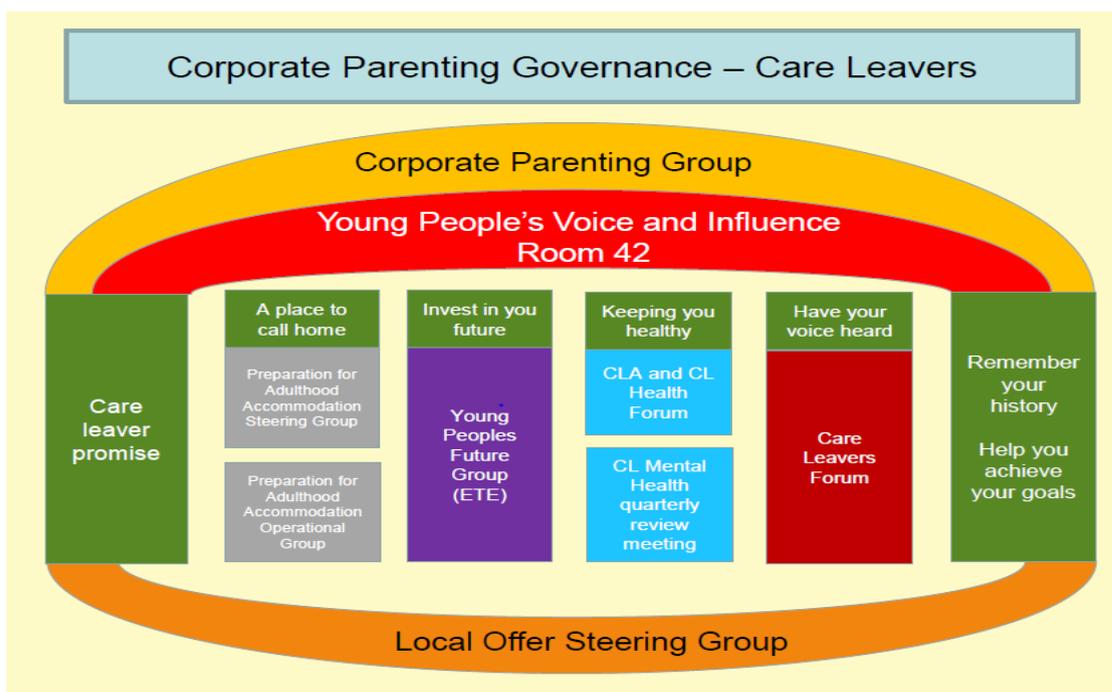
“The improved focus from elected members in their corporate parenting role, alongside strong corporate ownership, has led to noticeable improvements in achieving permanence for children” (Ofsted monitoring visit letter, 14th January 2022), and,

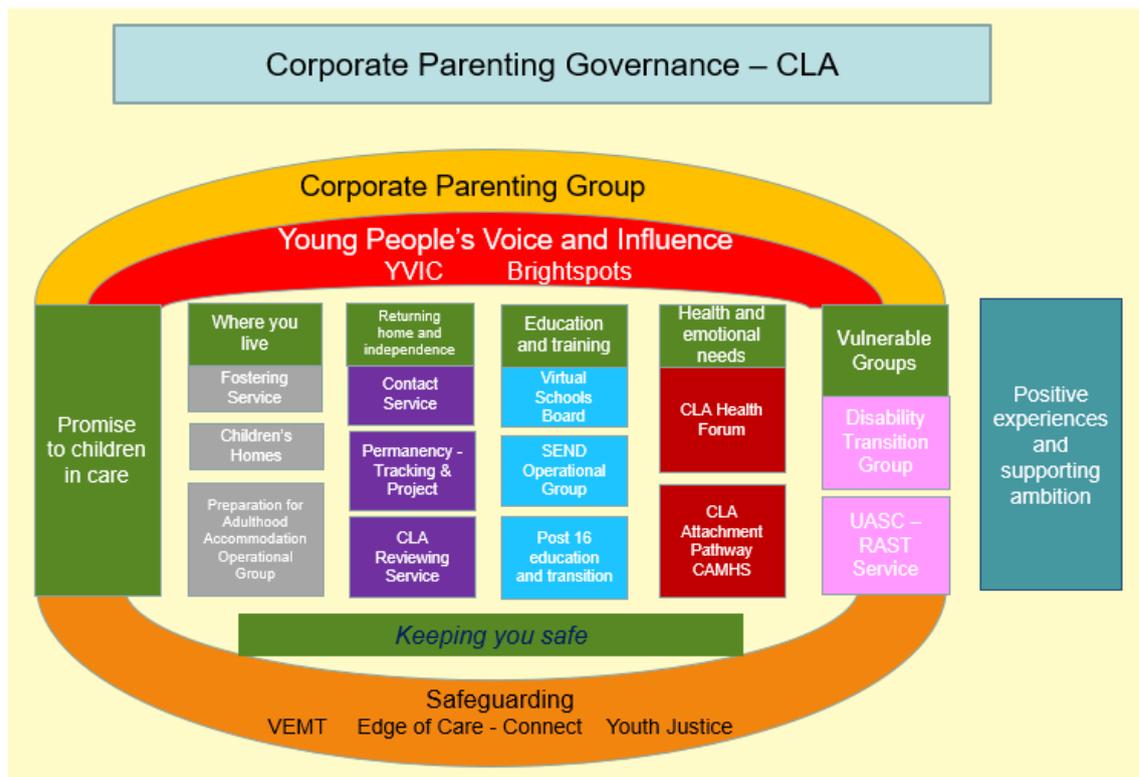
“A stable and determined leadership team, supported by deeply invested and committed elected members, has established a tenacious corporate parenting partnership.” (Ofsted monitoring visit letter, 9th May 2022).

Corporate Parenting Board

We have further strengthened our corporate parenting board arrangements, ensuring that our elected members have quarterly access to high-quality performance information, allowing for a greater understanding of the experiences of our children looked after, our care leavers and our carers. This also means that elected members are better able to hold officers to account for outcomes.

The diagrams below show the corporate parenting governance arrangements. Each of the thematic groups which form part of the arrangements reports on progress on a quarterly basis, including progress in relation to taking forward children and care leavers’ Bright Spots improvement priorities.





Our care leavers and YVIC members routinely report to corporate parenting panel about their work and the progress being made, with regular updates from officers on progress in relation to children and young people's priorities. There is now more opportunity for less formal dialogue between children looked after and care leavers and elected members outside of board meetings: for example, events, care leavers' forum and room 42.

Council Leadership

The "strong corporate ownership" found by Ofsted is reflected in a number of significant ways, for example:

- Strong joint working with Neighbourhoods & Housing and Finance colleagues on delivering the strategy to open new solo and dual children's homes to better meet the complex needs of individual children, ensuring that they are better cared for in Hull.
- The leadership of the deputy chief executive (and director of regeneration) in supporting the development of education, training and employment opportunities for care leavers
- Agreement to increase the foster care skills allowances to ensure better retention of in-house foster carers
- The continuous development and evolution of the leaving care and housing joint protocol for care leavers, ensuring rent relief, priority access to council tenancies and refurbishing
- Support for additional legal capacity to help accelerate safe exits from public care via

court applications

- Continuous project support from corporate transformation, including significant work on the corporate parenting toolkit and member training and on proposals for new and replacement children's homes.

Elected Members

A revised corporate parenting toolkit and training package has been developed and agreed for all elected members. The toolkit helps all elected members with advice and suggestions about how they can fulfil their responsibility as corporate parents (universal responsibility), together with additional advice for members with targeted (for example, members of corporate parenting board) and specialist responsibility.

The first member training session has taken place (July 2022) and was well-received. Over the next year, further training will be provided so that all elected members are clear about their corporate parenting role.

Council Employees

We are taking steps to ensure that all council employees understand the concept of being a corporate parent and what this means, irrespective of role. Following the premiere of 'Dream On' the chief executive highlighted the film and invited all council employees to watch it, reminding us all that we are corporate parents.

The corporate induction e-learning package for all new council employees has also been refreshed: all new starters with the council will watch 'Dream On' and spend time understanding corporate parenting.

More work is needed to embed an understanding of corporate parenting across the whole existing workforce, including opportunities for council employees to actively support children looked after and care leavers, via a mandatory e-learning package.

Our corporate parenting partners

We have strong working relationships with a range of key partners who recognise shared corporate parenting responsibilities. These include with health colleagues (the Designated Looked After Children Nurse chairs our CLA Health Forum) who work on ensuring access, including bespoke access, to a range of primary and specialist health services and with the Department for Work and Pensions on joint working with care leavers.

We also work closely with housing providers on ensuring that care leavers have access to suitable and affordable properties and with community and voluntary sector providers, for example, for advice, guidance and mentoring, supported housing and drug and alcohol services.

Listening and responding to children looked after and care leavers

We continue to have a focus on strengthening the relationships between children looked after and their social workers and care leavers with their personal advisors, and on the direct work with children and young people which enables their lived experiences to inform their plans. The outcomes of audit and external inspection continue to

demonstrate that social workers and personal advisors know our children, young people and young adults well and are ambitious for them. This focus is supported by the work which is continuous on developing practitioner confidence in using direct work tools, including words & pictures, three houses and the 'Mind of my Own' apps.

During 2021 we consulted widely with children looked after and with care leavers via 'Bright Spots' about how it feels to be looked after and supported by us. We provide greater detail on that feedback and what we are focused on doing as a result later in this strategy. We have pro-actively focused on ensuring that the messages are heard and reflected upon, via young people led dissemination events (including for corporate parenting board members), supporting our young people to create podcasts and films and discussing findings widely across, for example, children's social care leadership groups and teams, virtual school and designated teachers and with foster carers, so that we each have made commitments to address priority issues in our day-to-day practice.

The arrangements we have in place with our children in care council (YVIC) and with care leavers, to directly hear from them about what is most important and to work collaboratively on improvements, have also been strengthened.



"We can help make care better for other kids too".



Examples of this work include:

- Supporting YVIC members to create a powerful podcast about the impact of changes of social worker and ensuring that the messages are heard by all social workers and social work managers & leaders. The podcast now also forms part of standard induction for all social workers
- Co-facilitating with Coram Voice and YVIC members all of our children looked after Bright Spots dissemination and action planning events
- Supporting our children looked after to contribute to the 'A National Voice' campaign as part of the independent review of children's social care, including attendance at the National Day of Action at the Houses of Parliament in June 2022
- Co-production work, including on developing revised CLA review consultation booklets, on practice standards about changes in social worker and (alongside care leavers via room 42) on the groundwork needed to sign up to the 'My things matter' pledge.
- Responding to feedback from care leavers, as part of the care leavers Bright Spots dissemination process, by establishing the current forum arrangements, ensuring an effective process for addressing the issues that matter most to care leavers, agreeing improvement action and feeding back on progress.
- Developing the local 'Top 10' offer to care leavers linked to the ongoing engagement and improvement work described above.

Celebrating Success

As corporate parents we are committed to celebrating the successes and achievements of our children looked after and care leavers, including, but not limited to, academic success. We do this in various ways, including the inaugural Blue Diamond Awards (held in October 2021) for our care leavers and the Virtual School Awards for children looked after. Last year (2021) the pandemic interrupted our plans for an event for children looked after, but this will take place on 6th October 2022. Plans are advanced for this year's Blue Diamond Awards which will take place on 19th October 2022. Last year's event was a huge success, with numerous nominations, and provided a unique opportunity for us, as corporate parents, to recognise and celebrate the achievements of our care leavers.

Next Steps:

- We will continue to provide corporate parenting training for all elected members so that all existing members have been trained (**by 31st March 2023**) and that the training is provided for new members as part of their induction programme.
- We will ensure that all new council employees understand what being a corporate parent means and that all new starters watch 'Dream On' – **from October 2022**
- We will build on the corporate induction and develop an e-learning package for all council employees, based on the toolkit, and seek agreement for this to be mandatory for all employees – **by 31st March 2023**

- We will honour and celebrate the many and varied achievements and successes of our children looked after and care leavers respectively via the Virtual School Celebration Event and Blue Diamond Awards. **By November 2022**

2. Our vision

Our vision for the children and young people we look after and our care leavers

We want every child and young person in our care, and all of our care leavers, to achieve the best possible outcomes with the opportunities to enjoy life, be safe from harm and to have the support they need to help them be successful adults.

We want all children and young people looked after by us to grow up in a loving and safe home; having a healthy and fun childhood. We want them to do their best at school, succeed in whatever they put their mind to and to be able to access excellent help and support when they need it. We want them to have their ideas and views heard and taken seriously in helping to decide and plan what they need. We want them to be active citizens and enjoy living in a city which welcomes and treats all people fairly and equally and does not tolerate any form of discrimination.

Most of all we want all of our children and young people and our care leavers to be the happiest they can be. And this is what they want from us too.



“But in the meantime [until it’s safe for me to go home], to make sure I have everything I need to be happy.”

3. Our Principles

The following principles underpin our approach to corporate parenting. We will:

- Look after children when this is necessary to ensure that they are safe. Children will be looked after by us for the shortest time possible, returning to the care of their parents or other family members as soon as it is safe for them to do so. When children cannot be safely cared for within their own family, we will make alternative permanent arrangements for them as soon as we can, to ensure that they are cared for and brought up, wherever possible, in family environments.



“The social workers listen to us all and try to get everyone strong again so that we can all be together. It’s not easy, but that’s what my family and everyone who works with us wants”

“I realise that care isn’t a dead-end destination. The idea behind it is to try to get me back to my family”

- Ensure that our children looked after are safe and that they have adults in their lives who they trust to take care of them and help and support them.
- Ensure that when being looked after, brothers and sisters are cared for together wherever possible, unless their individual needs determine this to be inappropriate.
- Help children develop effective relationships with their carers and to spend time with the people most important to them (for example, brothers, sisters and birth parents/families) in line with their care plan. We will also work with carers to help increase their emotional resilience and practical skills in caring for vulnerable children, particularly those with complex needs.



- Be ambitious for all our children and young people, encouraging and supporting their personal development in order to ensure that they reach their full potential.
- Ensure that children, young people and young adults have an allocated qualified social worker or personal advisor, with whom they can build an effective, trusting and supportive relationship.



- Work with internal and external partners to provide integrated, high quality, equitable services.
- Take into account the views of children, young people, young adults, parents and carers in planning and running services which affect them.

4. Our Promises to children looked after and care leavers

Our principles are reflected in the promises that we have made to our children looked after and to our care leavers.

In both cases, the development of the promises has been led by our children looked after (YVIC) and by our care leavers. Our sets of promises are contained in full at Appendix 1. In relation to children looked after, the promise was developed by members of Young Voices Influencing Care in 2019 and consulted on widely with children and young people looked after. It sets out Hull City Council's Corporate Parenting Board's commitment to children and young people in our care.

In relation to care leavers, young people said:

"This is a set of promises to care leavers (your young people). It is a commitment from you as our corporate parent to ensure that we reach our full potential and enjoy the same opportunities in life that any good parent would provide. When you are thinking of us we want you to ask the question: **would this be good enough for my child?**"

5. Delivering on our promises - children looked after

Children in Hull are now only looked after for as long as they need to be. A fundamental cultural change, supported by the social work practice framework and stronger oversight of progress for children at all levels, means that:

- Fewer children are becoming looked after - more children are being supported to remain safely within their family networks.
- More children are returning to their family networks.
- Where children cannot be safely cared for within their own family, early permanence planning is supporting increased adoptions.

This fundamental cultural change has meant that we have been able to safely reduce the number of children looked after by us from a high of 941 (30th June 2021) to 833 (12th August 2022).

What is going well for our children looked after?

In the Bright Spots survey, our children looked after gave us some very positive feedback about their lived experiences and how it feels to be looked after by us. This included important feedback about feeling safe, having adults in their lives they could trust, the strength and importance of the relationships with their social workers and carers, enjoying school and college and having adults around them taking an interest in their educational progress.

Around 9 out of 10 children and young people (4-18yrs):



- Trusted the adults they lived with;



- Felt the adults they lived with noticed how they were feeling; and



- 'Always' felt safe where they lived.



Trusted adult

- All children (8-11yrs) and 94% of young people (11-18yrs) felt they had an adult in their life they could trust.



Bedrooms

- Nearly all (95%) children and young people (4-18yrs) liked their bedrooms.



- Of those who knew who their social worker was, 90% felt they could trust their social worker.

Children looked after in Hull feel safer than their peers in other local authorities and when compared with the same age group (4 -17) in the general population.



Liking school

- Overall, 86% of children and young people (4-18yrs) liked school or college – a higher percentage than in the general population.



Support for learning

- Children and young people (8-18yrs) in Hull were more likely than children in the general population to say the adults they lived with showed an interest in what they were doing at school (97% vs. 90%).

Our children looked after are more likely than are children in the general population to enjoy school or college and to be cared for by adults who show an interest in what they are doing at school.



- Hull's looked after young people (aged 11-18yrs) appeared more likely than those responding to surveys in other local authorities to score very high in terms of their:
 - life satisfaction (48% vs. 36%)
 - happiness the previous day (39% vs. 33%)
 - feeling that things they did were worthwhile (51% vs. 35%)
 - positivity about the future (47% vs. 26%)

These, and other Bright Spots outcomes, are successes to be celebrated and built upon.

What needs to improve for our children looked after?

Our children looked after (YVIC members) have identified five priorities for us to focus on and improve for all children looked after, based on what children have told us in the Bright Spots survey. These are:

- How we manage changes of social worker
- Having good friends
- Being able to do the same things as their friends
- Being bullied, or worrying about being bullied, at school
- Spending time with their family.

These issues were important to some children looked after:



Social worker continuity

- Two-thirds (67%) of young people (11-18yrs) had had two or more social workers in the previous year.



Good friends

- Children and young people in Hul were more than twice as likely to not have a good friend compared with the general population (7% vs. 3%).



Able to do same things as friends

- More than one in five (22%) young people (11-18yrs) felt they did not get the chance to do similar things to their friends.



Bullying

- Four in ten (41%) children in the 8-11yrs age-group were afraid to go to school due to bullying.



Family time

- Over one quarter of children and young people (8-18yrs) wanted more contact with their family including with mum (29%), dad (28%) and siblings (34%).

There is some overlap between these issues which relates to the ‘stigma’ of being looked after for some children and the things we do and say as adults which draw attention to children as being looked after. For example, some children highlighted that having social workers visit them in school draws attention to them as being ‘different’, whilst others highlighted some of the barriers which they sometimes experience in being able to do ‘normal’ things, like have a friend round to tea, attend sleepovers, have mobile phones or go shopping in town with friends, which make it more difficult to make and sustain friendships.

Our children looked after know that they may experience changes of social worker, and our YVIC members know too what we are doing to address social worker recruitment and retention challenges and achieve greater stability. The experience of too many of our children looked after is of too many changes and how it makes them feel when we do not manage change well. Some children have told us that they feel it is their fault when a social worker leaves, that they have not had an explanation or a proper good-bye and about the frustration they feel when they need to tell their story again to a new worker.

What have we done about these issues so far?

We have devoted considerable time, including at dissemination events and via stop the clocks sessions, as practitioners and managers, reflecting on these issues and what we all need to think about and do differently in our practice. The messages have been widely shared too with foster carers, virtual school staff and designated teachers. This has resulted in individual and team commitments to ‘do’ and ‘think’ differently.

Our YVIC members created a powerful podcast in February 2022 describing how it feels when social workers change and there are no good-byes, no proper explanation and no sensitive introductions. All of our social workers and social work managers have listened to the podcast and made practice commitments as a result. The podcast is now a standard part of induction for student social workers and new starters.

The “You said, we are doing” posters, created following the Bright Spots dissemination and planning event (May 2022) led by YVIC members, capture some of the work we are doing to address our children’s priority issues:

FRIENDS

You Said:

I live far away from school and don't get to see my school friends outside of school. 8-11yrs

It's not just about hobbies; we want chance to just 'hang out' with friends.

It's too difficult to go to friends' houses/ have friends over - it should be easier.

Foster carers/ social workers need to understand it's important for us to have friends.
Having a mobile phone is important to stay in touch with my friends
- YVIC Members

We are doing:

- In looked after reviews, IROs will always ask children and young people about their friendships and consider that hobbies and activity groups do not mean a young person or child always has friends at these groups.
- More will be done by social workers and IROs in reviews to make plans around children and young people being able to go out with their friends, have mobile phones and be able to go on sleepovers, to stop children and young people feeling different.
- Staff who attended the Bright Spot events have made promises to how they will change their practice or work within their teams as a result of what our children and young people have said, including the impact when a child or young person has had to move out of area.
- Further support and training is being offered in regards to delegated responsibility to make sure everyone knows what this means, to stop children and young people missing out on opportunities with their friends.

Hull City Council

Feeling Different

You Said:

I don't like to talk about where I will go next and I also don't like to talk about being in care because if I am happy and somebody talks about me being in care it makes me upset. - 8-11yrs

14% of our children in care said they didn't have a good friend.

I liked my bedroom but it is small. I didn't have anyone to play football with yesterday. 4-7yrs

We are doing:

- As part of reviews, IROs have promised they will always ask children and young people about their friendships and recognise that hobbies and activity groups don't mean people have friends at these groups.
- More will be done by social workers and IROs in reviews to make plans around children and young people being able to go out with their friends, have mobile phones and be able to go on sleepovers, to stop children and young people feeling different.
- Our social workers have made promises that I speak to children and young people about how my role as a social worker is impacting on their life, and what I can do differently to make sure they don't stand out to their friends.
- We are training and supporting our social workers to use Mind of My Own (MOMO) as a platform where our children and young people can share their wishes and feelings, and where social workers can promote the 'all about me' option to allow young people to share the best ways they like to share their views and feelings.

Hull City Council

Bullying

You Said:



Social workers constantly singling me out at school for work and coming into school for stuff.
11-18yrs

Looking 'different' leads to bullying

School 'interventions' make things worse

- YCVIC Members

We are doing:

- The virtual headteacher for Hull City Council attended one of our Bright Spot events. They have made a promise to ensure practitioners always ask the right questions in PEP meetings about what life is like for a child looked after in school
- We have made it an expectation that our social workers should not go and see children in school without their permission unless there is an absolutely vital reason to do so.
- We know we have further work to do around school taxi pick ups, and making sure professionals don't do things that make our children and young people looked after stand out as being different and will be working closely with schools around this.
- Staff who attended the Bright Spot events have made promises to how they will change their practice or work within their teams as a result of what our children and young people have said, including always ensuring they ask the child where they want to be seen, and advocating for them when there are bullying issues.
- All school designated teachers will spend time thinking about this issue at their conference this half term.

FAMILY TIME

You Said:



I at least want to see my mum again [even] if it's one time, because I don't remember anything.
11-18yrs

Arranging contact takes too long, we don't know enough about why we can't see certain family. Family time can help us cope.

- YVIC Feedback

We are doing:

- We have created a 'Working group' reviewing family time arrangements and taking on board the feedback from YVIC
- Staff who attended the Bright Spot events have made promises to how they will change their practice or work within their teams as a result of what our children and young people have said.
- Our IROs have promised that as part of a child or young person's looked after review, they will always ask questions about family time. As part of this, they will make sure there is a clear plan for children and young people around having time with people who are important to them and explanations when this is not possible.
- Our family time workers now sit within our social care teams so children and young people get consistency and timeliness in regards to being able to spend time with people who are important to them.
- We are in the process of facilitating more training on life story work as every child and young person should have as much information about their life as possible from before they were looked after. Practice learning sessions are taking place to support social workers to help them find the best ways of getting information about children's families and history, so they know where they came from and who was part of their life.

CHANGE OF SOCIAL WORKER



You Said:



"I don't like it when you get a new one and they ask you the same questions over and over again. Surely they keep a file, they don't need to start again every change?"

"When social workers have to change there should be a really good reason why, we need a proper explanation as we have a lot of things going on and worry about things"

We are doing:

Every child or young person will get a written explanation and a meeting where their old social worker introduces their new social worker whenever possible.

We have made a promise that children and young people will always be told the reason when this has happened so they will never feel like it is their fault.

The social work standards have been revised and updated with these practice expectations.

YVIC created a podcast looking at how they felt about a change of social worker. So far, over 100 social workers have heard the Podcast and many more will hear it over the next couple of months. We will now be playing the podcast as part of the induction training when new social workers start working for Hull City Council

We have a task and finish group that are creating words and pictures and letter templates for social workers to personalise for children and young people.

We will be creating a poster of promises on what we promise to do when you have a change of social worker.

Our next steps on our children's priorities

Some important things which will make a difference to children looked after and are captured above in 'what we are doing' are fundamentally about how we talk to and listen to children and focus on the things which matter most to them. This approach and culture need to be consistently embedded and become a continuous part of our practice.

But there are also specific actions which we have planned:

- We will issue our revised social work practice standards in September 2022. The standards reflect the issues raised by our children looked after. This includes a clear set of expectations about how we manage planned (transfer policy) and unplanned changes of social worker. **September 2022**
- We will dip-sample the records of at least 12 children each month who have experienced a change of social worker, to check that we have managed this change well. This will include, wherever possible, talking to the child about how they have experienced change. **From July 2022 – monthly**
- We will feedback to all children looked after (aged 4-17) about the key things they told us in Bright Spots and what we are doing to address them. **By end October 2022**
- We will make sure that our children looked after are able to do the same things as their friends do, via a programme of work in September and October, aimed at supporting carers to make age-appropriate, risk-sensible decisions, supported by up-to-date delegated authority. **By 30th November 2022**
- We will plan and deliver more Bright Spots feedback, for our foster carers, to ensure that they all know the great things our children say about care, but also the things that worry them. **September – December 2022**
- We will finalise and publish our updated policy on pocket money and savings for

children looked after. **30th November 2022**

- Based on an analysis of children’s feedback nationally, Bright Spots (Coram Voice) have offered free support to local authorities to develop their practice in relation to family time and staying connected. We have expressed an interest and will take up this offer if successful. **31st October 2022**
- We will implement ‘Signs of Belonging’ (including the forms which support the practice we need to see) which will help ensure a heightened focus on ‘connections’ for children looked after and the ability to spend time with the people who are most important to them. **March & April 2023**
- Once we have embedded ‘Signs of Belonging’ we will revisit the tools which form part of ‘Family Seeing’ so that we strengthen still further our practice in relation to the life-long connections which matter most to our children. **October – December 2023.**
- We will run ‘Bright Spots’ again, so that we can find out what has changed for our children looked after. **January – March 2024**

Our additional priorities for our children looked after

There are some additional ‘big things’ which we will focus on to ensure that all of our children looked after are the happiest they can be:

Receiving high-quality care in Hull.

We know how important it is to our children and young people that when we need to “step-in” to keep them safe, that they are cared for locally in Hull and that they receive the highest quality of care that they all need and deserve.

Our children looked after gave us some fantastic feedback about their carers and the difference they have made to their lives. Building on this, and our success in building and opening dual and solo children’s homes we have ambitious plans to continue to develop the range and quality of local provision.

In June 2022, our corporate strategy team agreed, and we announced, a significant package of new investment for our foster carers, to support our current carers with all the wonderful things they do and to help with the recruitment of more local families.

Building on our success in opening new children’s homes we now have a high-quality range of 15 children’s homes across the city, comprising a blend of solo and dual through to group living. This has enabled us to reduce the number of our children being looked after away from Hull by over 20 children.

Through the work of Connect, the new reprovisioned edge of care service, more children are living safely at home or with their extended family. Through a combination of local and DfE funding we are rebuilding one of our homes for children with a disability: this will allow us to offer more short breaks to children and families, within a high-quality home co-designed with families. We have ambitious plans to continue to develop the range and quality of our local offer, ensuring that more of our children receive high-quality care and

support locally.

This year we established our first Mockingbird constellation supported by the Fostering Network. The Mockingbird family model is a great way of offering foster care through an extended family model. Through the model, children build their networks of trusted adults as well as building friendships with other children. The impact of Mockingbird is already being seen with the prevention of placements ending, friendships being formed, children's confidence growing and carers feeling part of a bigger family.

For older young people we have increased our offer of accommodation. Alongside our staying put arrangements, supported lodgings providers and supported accommodation there is now an enhanced shared tenancy scheme and a housing first offer. Recently, Hull was also successful in gaining funding to develop a staying close scheme for children who live in children's homes.

Next Steps

- A further Mockingbird constellation is planned to be in place **by 31st March 2023**
- The first Staying Close arrangement to be in place **by 31st March 2023**

Helping our children looked after to be the happiest they can be

Based on their own experiences and the mental health and emotional well-being challenges which some of them experience, our care leavers have told us about how important it is that we "get it right early for children". Getting it right means understanding the impact of trauma, making sure that we have the right psychological and emotional support in place for children looked after and that we all (social workers, carers, teachers) have a trauma-informed mindset.

Our children looked after have told us about their worries and not all are as happy as we want them to be:



Coping with worries

- More than two thirds (71%) of children (8-11yrs) reported that they worried about their feelings and behaviour.



Well-being

Whilst most young people (11-18yrs) were happy, around 1 in 10:

- Felt that things they did in their life were not worthwhile
- Were not positive about their futures
- Were unhappy the day before
- Had low life satisfaction

All of our foster carers and staff within the children's homes are trained in PACE and the training offer has been refocused to have a greater emphasis on trauma-informed practice. Over recent years there has been investment to the CAMHS CLA Team who provide psychological support to our carers and social workers to help the children they look after. Recently health commissioners have agreed to fund four additional psychologists. This will enable each children's home to have individual psychological support.

We know that the experience of early trauma can make it difficult for pupils to settle in school, as well as where they live. Flooded with stress hormones, they may be operating in 'survival mode'; hypervigilant, jumpy, triggered by seemingly inconsequential stimuli. Equally, they may be hypo-aroused, in a chronic state of freeze. Distressed behaviour of this kind can lead to sanctions within a setting that is not trauma informed. These in turn exacerbate the challenges because the child's sense of psychological safety and trust in adults is further eroded.

Hull's Learning Partnership, a collaboration of all the city's school leaders, has committed to trauma-informed practice as a strategic priority. This priority was launched through a trauma-informed schools conference in June 2022 which focused on 'Relationships that make a Difference'.

Next Steps

- Four additional psychologists will join the CAMHS CLA team this year – **by 31st March 2023** (depending on recruitment)
- During the autumn term of 2022, a trauma-informed training offer will be rolled out to all schools, building on and consolidating the offer already available through Vantage Teaching School Hub, the Virtual School, psychology service and MHST teams – **by 31st December 2022**

Ensuring that all of our children looked after receive full-time, quality education that meets their needs

Running alongside the training offer is a 'Maintaining Educational Placement' strategy. The distressed behaviour outlined above can lead to reduced provision or, worse, placement breakdown. A refreshed learner-concern notification process will now result in robust support and challenge from virtual school and / or SEND caseworkers around the extent to which the school environment is stress-reducing and not stress-inducing. Trauma-informed risk assessments will be utilised within the revised learner of concern pathway.

When provision is reduced or placements do breakdown, early help resource will be harnessed to ensure that there is no loss of relational and regulating experiences for children whose social and emotional needs are paramount. To this end, tutoring will be offered from a base, in group situations where possible, whilst the journey back to full-time formal education is underway.

The virtual school team has recently been extended and enhanced to ensure that all children in care receive the best education for their needs from nursery to the end of their post-16 destinations. The virtual school team work with all designated teachers (DTs), designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) and, when needed, special education coordinators (SENCOs) in schools, colleges and training providers to promote high attendance, progress and to celebrate all achievements for academic, extra-curricular and character based activities.

The extension to the role of the virtual school to include all children with a social worker will see the virtual school expand its work with social care colleagues and all education providers to promote increased attendance and a decrease of suspensions and exclusions.

Next Steps

- Develop and implement a consistent trauma-informed risk assessment tool and approach across all schools to help support children looked after to remain in school with the right support and strategies in place – **by 31st December 2022**
- Identify a base, or bases, from which to provide tutoring for children looked after, to ensure continuing good quality education pending a return to formal full-time education – **by 28th February 2023.**

6. Delivering on our promises – care leavers

What is going well for our care leavers?

Similarly, the outcomes of the care leavers' Bright Spots survey gave us an important insight into what it feels like to be supported by us after leaving care and the things which are going well for our care leavers.



Leaving care support

Responses from care leavers in Hull indicated good levels of contact, consistency and trust in the support they received from their leaving care workers. For example:

- Most (75%) young people reported having the same worker over the past year. This is significantly higher than for care leavers nationally, and a Bright Spot of practice.
- Nearly all (95%) knew who their worker was.
- Most (70%) young people found it easy to get in contact with their worker.
- Most (87%) young people reported that they trusted their leaving care worker.
- Comments from young people indicated positive relationships with their workers.



Relationships:

Most care leavers had supportive relationships:

91% said they had a trusted person in their lives.

97% had someone who gave them emotional support.

The top 4 sources of emotional support identified by young people were: friends (69%), leaving care workers (51%), partners (51%) and mums (38%).

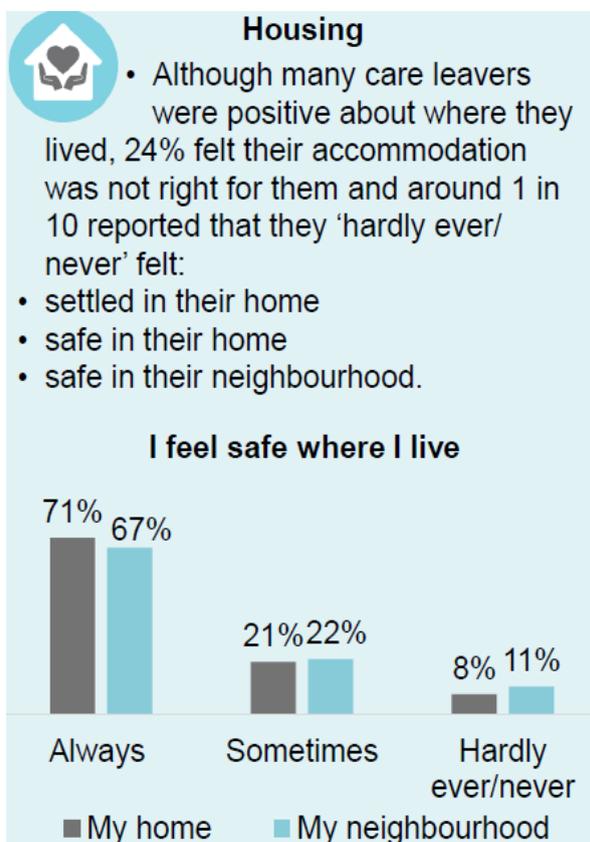
The feedback from our care leavers about the importance of their relationship with their leaving care worker, the levels of contact and trust and the consistency of support that they receive are also reflected in our learning from audit and in our monitoring visit in February 2022.

What needs to improve for our care leavers?

In the Bright Spots survey the most significant issues affecting some of our care leavers were:

- About where they live, and whether they feel safe and settled
- About education, employment and training

- About whether they have enough money, and,
- About their emotional well-being.



Participation in education, employment and training



- 4 in 10 (40%) of the group were not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- This compares to 1 in 10 young people in the general population.
- For some, Covid had affected their ability to find or stay in work.

Finances:



- In comparison to young people in the general population, care leavers in Hull were more than twice as likely to report financial difficulties

Feelings



About 1 in 5 care leavers in Hull:

- Scored low in terms of how satisfied they were with their life overall (23%);
- Scored low in terms of whether they felt the things they did were worthwhile (21%);
- Gave a low score for how happy they had felt the previous day (20%); and
- Did not feel positive about their future (17%).

When considering these findings from Bright Spots and helping plan the dissemination and planning event (November 2021), our care leavers felt that these were not 'new' issues and challenged us to strengthen our arrangements to continually hear their 'voice', work collaboratively with them on improvements and ensure that there were strong and regular arrangements to feed back on the work we had agreed.

One of the key things we did was to establish the Care Leavers' Forum, which now meets with a thematic focus, selected by our care leavers, on a quarterly basis. We have taken steps, via room 42 and our personal advisors to ensure that forum is open to all care leavers and attended by as many as possible. Our leaders and elected members

are also actively engaged in forum. Monthly 'Action for us' sessions held at room 42 and led by our care leaver champions also create the space for care leavers to raise the issues most important to them to help influence the focus of forum meetings.

The forum meetings during 2022 have focused on those issues (outlined above) which are most important to our care leavers and have led to key improvements and agreed next steps (summarised below). This shows the dynamism and power of forum: listening to care leavers, making improvements and agreeing further work:

Accommodation Forum – 6th January 2022.

Key improvements:

- Agreed clear lines of communication with housing colleagues to expedite solutions when any care leaver is experiencing issues related to accommodation
- An enhanced offer, in addition to decoration, to provide blinds for council properties before a young person moves in, thereby enhancing feelings of safety and security
- Two-weeks rent-free at the start of a new tenancy to allow young people to adjust and make the property their own.
- Agreed process of escalation for repairs so that care leavers are prioritised.
- There is now a fortnightly panel meeting in place with Targeted Youth Support and Leaving Care Team to award Band B status and to progress to housing to award a bidding number for care leavers within 3 days.

Next Steps:

- Further develop shared tenancy scheme capacity. In partnership with Neighbourhood & Housing colleagues an additional 15 bedspaces across the city (taking capacity from 60 to 75) will be available, **by end November 2022**

Education, Employment & Training Forum – 17th February 2022

Key improvements:

- Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) now have a system in place to identify young people as care leavers to enable joint working with personal advisors to avoid sanctions being applied.
- Strengthened partnership working with DWP has also led to the provision of assisted work coaches to support care leavers gain employment
- There has been a significant increase in the number of care leavers working with the champions, which in turn has led to more care leavers engaging with the employment hub.
- There has been an increase in the range of apprenticeship and work trial offers across the council. These opportunities are also publicised on the 'local offer' web page.

- Champions are targeting their work and are now working more closely with personal advisors to identify care experienced young people who will benefit from support in accessing education, training or employment.
- A regular employment opportunity bulletin is produced by the champions and sent to all care leavers not in education, employment or training.

Next Steps:

- The leaving care team are working in partnership with regeneration colleagues to produce a prospectus which will detail opportunities for work experience, work taster days and apprenticeship across council departments for care experienced young people. The prospectus is co-produced with young people and will be available by **30th November 2022**.
- Champions will continue to explore apprentice/work opportunities for care leavers with local businesses (and have recently had success with a company which builds homes) – **continuous development activity with reports back via Young People’s Future Group to Corporate Parenting Panel.**

Health (physical, mental & emotional wellbeing) Forum – 14th July 2022

Key Improvements:

- A care leavers emotional skills group is now being held once a week at R42 with a psychologist. The course will last 15 weeks and provides a rolling programme of emotional support.
- Free prescriptions are now in place for all care leavers.
- A range of mindfulness apps have been shared with care leavers.
- Care leavers are more aware of the ‘crisis crash pad’ and how to access this and whole weekend opening is now being trialled as a result of the engagement at forum.

Next Steps:

- Psychologist (Dr Nathan Badger) is to meet with a group of care leavers to gain a more in-depth understanding of their experience of accessing mental health provision. This feedback will then be used to inform senior managers in the NHS to look at ways of re-shaping service delivery – **meeting taking place by 31st January 2023**
- A ‘Top 10 health local offer will be developed with feedback from the health forum – **by 31st January 2023**
- R42 drop-in sessions have been further developed and with extended opening times. A 4-week rolling programme will include CVs, art and craft activities, visit to local industry, business/service day, fun activity trip and general drop-in sessions. 17-year-olds are also being encouraged to attend as part of the transition to leaving care. These sessions support emotional well-being and also training, education and employment – **with effect from September 2022.**

Care leavers have determined that the topic for the next forum (4th October 2022) will be the cost-of-living crisis, reflecting their worries about how they will cope and linking to the financial difficulties already felt by some as reflected in Bright Spots.

The enhancements to our local “offer” to our care leavers as their corporate parents are captured on the local offer website and also within a regularly updated ‘Top Ten’ Local Offers poster. Care leavers also have access to this information via the care leavers app and social media platforms. Since it is organic and being frequently updated the current ‘Top 10’ offers are not included as an appendix here.



Next Steps:

- Further develop and improve our care leavers’ website to enhance both the ‘look’ and the functionality **by 30th April 2023**
- We will run ‘Bright Spots’ again, so that we can find out what has changed for our care leavers. **January – March 2024**

Appendix – The promises posters

The PROMISE

The Promise to children and young people in care was developed by members of Young Voices Influencing Care in 2019 and consulted on widely with children and young people in care. It sets out Hull City Council's Corporate Parenting Board's commitment to children and young people in our care.

- 1** We promise to provide you with a suitable home where you can feel part of a family or a group.
- 2** We promise to keep you safe from harm where you live, at school and in the city.
- 3** We promise to work alongside your family and support you to return home if it is in your best interest.
- 4** We promise to encourage you to get involved in clubs and activities so that you can make new friends and develop your interests.
- 5** We promise to provide suitable time with the family members who are important to you.
- 6** We promise to support you with any health and emotional needs.
- 7** We promise to help you do your best at school and give you support when you need it.
- 8** We promise to support you in taking up employment, education or training opportunities after you leave school.
- 9** We promise to support you to become independent successful adults with access to appropriate accommodation when you need it.

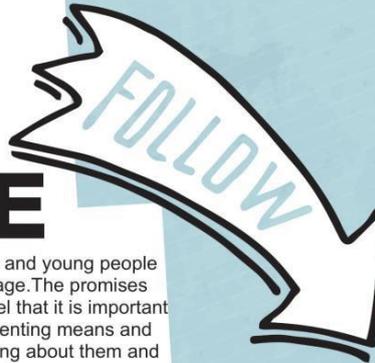


3997 Corporate Marketing



Hull City Council CARE LEAVER PROMISE

CREATED BY



The Care Leavers promises relate to children and young people who are care leavers between 16-25 years of age. The promises have been developed by young people who feel that it is important that everyone knows about what corporate parenting means and the things people need to consider when thinking about them and what support they are providing.

Young People said.....

"This is a set of promises to Care Leavers (your young people). It is a commitment from you as our Corporate Parent to ensure that we reach our full potential and enjoy the same opportunities in life that any good parent would provide. When you are thinking of us we want you to ask the question, **WOULD THIS BE GOOD ENOUGH FOR MY CHILD?**"

A place to call home

- We will work with you to make sure you feel safe and comfortable in your home environment
- We will help you to look at your housing options so you can choose the most suitable accommodation for you.



Help you have your voice heard

- We will listen to your opinions and involve you in decision making regarding your life
- We will give you the opportunity to tell us what you think is going well and what you think needs improving regarding services and support the local authority provides.



Help you remember your history

- We will support you in keeping in touch with your family and friends
- We will make sure you are aware of the reasons you are in care/were in care.



Invest in your future

- Make more work experience and apprenticeships available for young people in care and those leaving care at Hull City Council and through their connections.
- Before you are ready to move on we will make sure you are prepared and have the skills to live independently (e.g. being able to manage money, know how to be responsible for your own health.)



Help you achieve your goals

- We will support you in having a good quality education.
- We will make sure you can participate in any school activities and provide suitable equipment to thrive in school, college and university.
- We will make sure you can try new leisure activities and have the chance to follow a new hobby.

Keep you healthy

- We will make sure the people caring for you can keep you safe and healthy and will support you to be able to look after yourself.
- We will make sure you are cared for like we would for our own children
- We will make sure you have access to health services and contact information

We as corporate parents are signing these promises to show a strong commitment to 'our young people'. We promise to consider the promises in everything that we do. We will use them to ensure that we are doing our best for you and will also use them to challenge ourselves when could do better. The following people within Hull City Council represent our Corporate Parents and agree to keep the promises above.