

# Kirklees Parenting Strategy

2024-2027



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## Foreword

Within this strategy we have use the term Kirklees Parenting Strategy to describe the authority's corporate parenting responsibilities.

We are incredibly proud to provide this forward to our Kirklees Parenting Strategy 2024 – 2027 setting out our ambition, commitment and focus to ensure that those children and young people living in, and leaving our care have the best possible opportunities, support and outcomes.

We know that to achieve our ambition for Kirklees to provide the best possible childhood for children in our care and for our care leavers to reach their full potential, we need to harness support from across our communities.

Kirklees is a fantastic place to live and grown up in and holds an enormous and diverse range of resources amongst its services, businesses and communities. Through this Kirklees Parenting Strategy, we commit to bringing these resources together to establish a community of support to enable us to provide our children with all the opportunities, happiness and success in life enjoyed by other children in our authority.

In Kirklees as in the rest of the country, children looked after do less well in school than their peers and are more likely to suffer ill health, particularly poor mental health. Many of these disadvantage's impact on later life with care leavers more likely than others to be out of work and learning and much less likely to go to college and university. Our determination as 'Kirklees Parents' is to address these disadvantages and to do all we can to influence our systems and services to support our children, young people and adult care leavers to achieve.

We know that no one agency or service can redress the disadvantage, stigma and discrimination often experienced by children in care and care leavers alone. We are therefore immensely grateful to the breadth of partners who have stepped forward in our authority to support the council deliver our legal duty as 'corporate parent' for these children and young people and establish our 'Community of Support'. Our commitment to improve outcomes for our children and care leavers are set out within the strategy below which is owned and overseen through our Kirklees Parenting Board constantly challenging ourselves and our communities as to 'would this be good enough for my child?'.



**Councillor Viv Kendrick**  
Cabinet Member for Children's  
Services

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ninienne Kendrick".



**Steve Mawson**  
Chief Executive  
Kirklees Council

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Mawson".



**Tom Brailsford**  
Executive Director  
Children and Families

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## Introduction

*‘Corporate parenting’ is the term used to refer to the responsibility of the council, to provide the best possible care and protection for children and young people who are ‘looked after’. At the core of this responsibility is the moral duty to provide the kind of support that any good parents would provide their own children. This includes enhancing the quality of life of looked after children as well as simply keeping them safe.*

House of Commons Children, Schools and Family Committee March 2009

Our Kirklees Parenting Strategy describes how Kirklees local authority and our partners, including housing, health services, Police, schools, and critically our local community and third sector partners, will come together and act as ‘responsible parents’ to children and young people living within our care and our care leavers. Effective corporate parenting requires everyone involved including elected members, officers of all departments of the council, social workers, teachers, GPs etc, to recognise their role as corporate parents and to understand and promote what they can contribute to enable us to be the best corporate parents we can be.

We are accountable for the delivery of our plan to:

- Children in Care Council
- Care Leavers Forum
- Kirklees Parenting Board
- Kirklees Children and Families Scrutiny Board
- Kirklees Full Council

Whilst we have set this out as a three-year strategy, our delivery will be supported through a series of live action plans that are driven within specific priority theme groups led by partners/officers and supported by elected member champions.

The strategic priorities in our strategy have been determined by both local and national priorities for children in care and care leavers and through consultation with children and young people. They are:

- 1. Supporting engagement and achievement in lifelong learning, education, training, and employment.**
- 2. Ensuring that our children in care and care leavers have safe, stable comfortable homes with access to continuing care and support.**
- 3. Ensuring that our children and young people have positive relationships and have opportunities to engage with positive fun activities.**
- 4. Listening and responding to the voice of our children, young people, and care leavers.**
- 5. Ensuring that our children, young people, and care leavers grow up healthy and have support to maximise their physical and emotional wellbeing.**
- 6. Developing our Care Leavers partnership to deliver success for life.**

## How we will achieve our ambition

We will achieve our ambitions through:

- Strong leadership and robust performance management.
- Maintaining the engagement and involvement of children, young people, and care leavers in developing and implementing our strategy.
- Inclusive and effective partnership working across Kirklees Council with support from identified elected member champions to each priority theme.
- Through continually building and promoting our ambitions through an evolving network of Kirklees Parenting Ambassadors from our wider community.

## Our pledge to children and young people in care and care leavers

- Help and support you to stay safe and have a healthy and active lifestyle.
- Involve you in all decisions about your life; want you to do well and encourage you to do and be the best that you can.
- Support you throughout your education and to plan for the future.
- Listen and make sure you know what will happen next.
- Celebrate your achievements.
- Make sure you have enough different people to support you.
- Help you have new experiences and develop your own interests.

## The corporate parenting principles

In delivering our strategy we will ensure that Kirklees parenting partners have regards when exercising their functions:

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those 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 gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- 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 for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

## **Kirklees parenting oversight**

'Corporate parenting' is the term used to describe the responsibility of local authorities towards children and young people in care. In Kirklees we have listened to the voices of children and young people in our care who asked that we localise our terms and use language more relevant to them. As part of our demonstration of this we have changed the name of our partnership arrangements to 'Kirklees Parenting Board'.

Kirklees parenting emphasises the collective responsibility of the local authority and its partners to achieve 'good parenting' for all children in care.

Kirklees parenting is not the sole responsibility of the children's social work services. It is the responsibility of the whole council, including councillors, our health service, and other partners.

'Good parenting' includes ensuring the child or young person's health, wellbeing, and safety as well as things like succeeding in school or other hobbies and interests based on their individual abilities and aspirations.

All elected members automatically hold corporate parenting responsibilities. There are many different ways in which elected members can promote their Kirklees parenting responsibilities.

A summary of elected members' Kirklees parenting responsibilities can be found towards the end of this strategy document.

## **Governance arrangements**

The Kirklees Parenting Board provides the strategic partnership to oversee and drive our arrangements for ensuring that children looked after by Kirklees local authority, and those adults previously looked after, achieve the best possible outcomes. The board is made up of elected members, key service leaders and service providers, including council officers and representatives from wider public services and our community and third sector organisations.

The Kirklees Parenting Board provides leadership by championing the specific needs of children and young people who are, or have been, looked after by the local authority. It does this through working with all elected members, officers within the council, with colleagues from partner agencies and with children and young people.

## **Democratic involvement and accountability**

The Kirklees Parenting Board is able to refer matters and provide information to the Children's Scrutiny Board. Minutes of the board will be available for review and action where needed. The board will also provide a report on its activity including progress made in respect of the priorities set out in this strategy to full council on an annual basis.

## Participation of children and young people

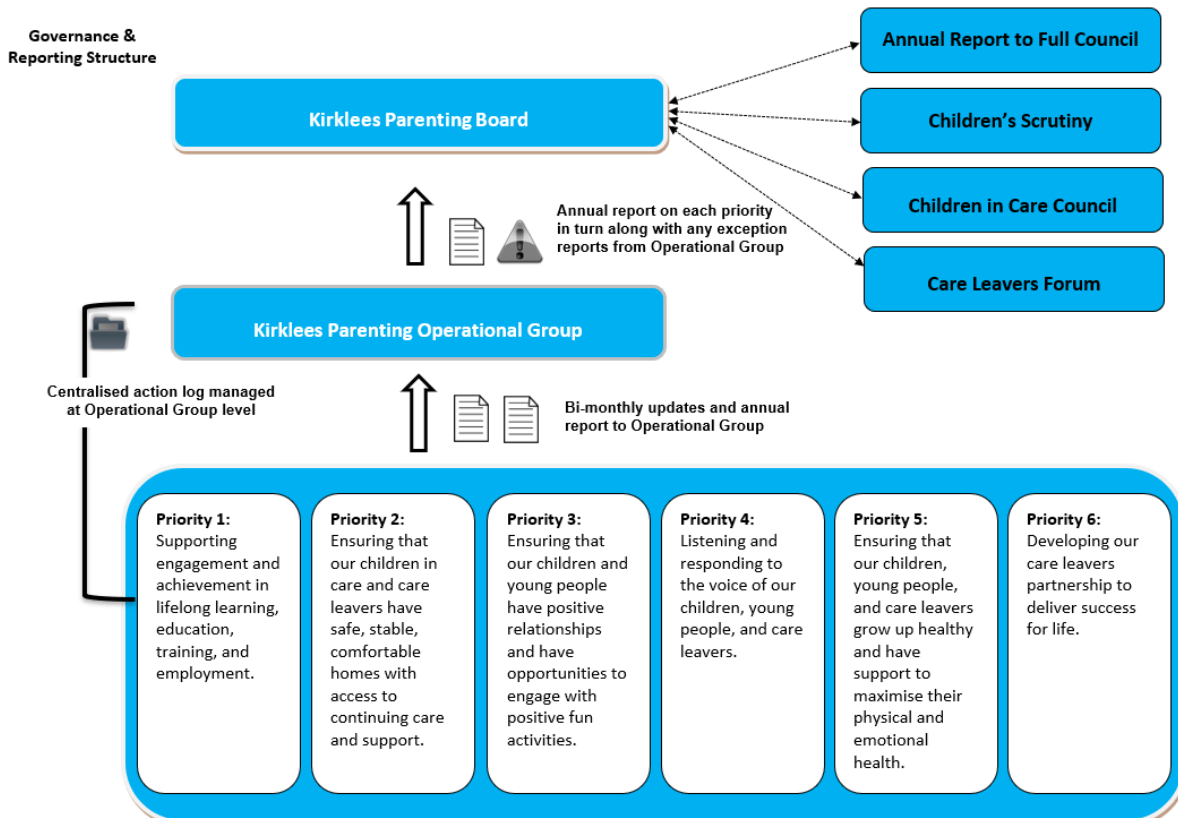
The voice of children and young people will be a consistent and influential feature of the Kirklees Parenting Board. Participation will be steered through the Care Leavers Forum and our Children in Care Council. The Kirklees Parenting Board will develop youth representatives (members from our Care Leavers Forum) who will be supported with training and invited to join the board as board members. There will be an annual ‘takeover’ by the members of the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum. The Head of Service for Corporate Parenting will meet at least six times a year with both the Care Leavers Forum and Children in Care Council to share progress, discuss priorities, and agree joint work to support the strategy.

## Operational delivery

In delivering the ambitions for our children looked after and care leavers set out within our strategy, a representative multi-agency delivery partnership, the Kirklees Parenting Operational Group will hold responsibility to drive priority plans and report back to the Kirklees Parenting Board through the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting.

Each of the board’s six priorities are to be led by senior officers from relevant service areas who will oversee and drive improvements in respect of each individual lead area. These priority themes will be reported back to the Kirklees Parenting Board in turn in a yearly cycle. The illustration in Figure 1 below sets out the process of reporting.

Figure 1





## Kirklees parenting training and awareness

To support effective governance and oversight from the Kirklees Parenting Board, a programme of training in respect of responsibilities and understanding of children looked after and care leavers needs, co-designed with our Children's Rights Team, Children in Care Council and Care Leaver Forum, has been developed. The Head of Service for Corporate Parenting is responsible to co-ordinate and facilitate a programme of training across our partnership, services and for board members.

## Our priorities

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5	Priority 6
					
Supporting engagement and achievement in lifelong learning, education, training and employment	Ensuring that our children in care and care leavers have safe, stable, comfortable homes with access to continuing care and support	Ensuring that our children and young people have positive relationships and have opportunities to engage with positive, fun activities	Listening and responding to the voice of our children, young people and care leavers	Ensuring that our children, young people and care leavers grow up healthy and have support to maximise their physical and emotional wellbeing	Developing our Care Leavers Partnership to deliver success for life

## Strategic priority 1: Supporting engagement and achievement in lifelong learning, education, training, and employment

### Vision

Parents want their children to have the best start in life and to reach their full potential. Kirklees is ambitious for all its children and young people and, like any good parent, has especially high aspirations for the children in our care.

Our vision is to ensure that all aspects of learning from early childhood development to preparation for adulthood and independence are a top priority for all those involved in the lives of our children and young people. We want to ensure they can learn and develop, attend and engage, attain and achieve, at every stage of their learning journey and go on to benefit from excellent opportunities for work experience, training, apprenticeships and employment.

As leaders responsible for ensuring that the local authority discharges its duty to promote the educational achievement of their looked after children, the Chief Executive of the council, the Lead Member for Children and Families and the Director of Children's Services will ensure that top priority is given to creating a culture of high educational aspirations for looked after children and care leavers across the council and its partners.

### What is the challenge?

Kirklees is not alone in the challenge of securing universally and consistently good outcomes linked to education, training, and employment for our looked after young people and care leavers, ensuring that they achieve economically sustainable futures. We recognise that for a small number of our children there can be challenges in identifying and securing the right education provision to meet identified needs.

Often the challenges of supporting and matching needs of our children and young people to the right education provision is compounded by challenges that a small number of our children experience of moving homes at short notice and at important stages in their school years.

### What we will do

- Engaging young people in learning in the environment which is right for them.
- Create an aspirations audit and work to widen young people's aspirations.
- Create opportunities within the world of work for care experienced young people.
- Ensure employability support is an offer in the district and is suitable for our young people and recognises the challenges they may face.
- Preparing them for quality work in growth sectors.

## What success will look like

Outcome statement	Outcome measure
Children and young people will be making at least expected progress across the range of statutory measures.	Early Years Foundation Stage, KS2 and KS 4 outcomes and measures of in-year progress
Children looked after will be attending and engaging in education, training, and employment from 2 –18.	% statutory school age attendance figures % statutory school age children looked after persistently absent % statutory school age children looked after unauthorised absences % statutory school age children looked after with at least one suspension % children looked after and care leavers participating in Years 12 and 13
All children looked after will have access to a full-time school offer.	No. statutory school age young people not in full time education No. statutory school age young people awaiting a school place
Aspirations and opportunities.	Aspirations audit complete for Year 9-13 Work placement opportunities for young people statutory school age
All children and young people in care have a high-quality personal education plan.	% children aged 2-18 who have a completed personal education plan each term % of children who have a personal education plan completed within 20 working days coming into care
Care leavers accessing employment, education, and training. Understanding the cohort and their needs.	% of care leavers in education, employment, training % employment rate for care leavers compared to standard rate
Pathway plan that sets out how they will be supported to achieve their potential at every age and stage.	% young people who have a quality pathway plan that reflects their goals and ambitions
Children looked after and care leavers will be supported to access higher education opportunities.	No. of care leavers accessing graduate and post graduate courses from 18-25
Kirklees will increase the number of care experienced students accessing higher education.	
Increased opportunities available for young people to progress into employment and volunteering opportunities.	Number of local employers committed to Care Leavers Covenant

Care experienced young people will have suitable employment support, which acknowledges their needs. This support will continue when they are in work to support with career development.	% care experienced young people on employment programmes achieving a successful outcome (sustained employment and career development)
Commitments to provide care leavers with work experience, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities will be encouraged through our social value policy and frameworks.	Number of contractual commitments made via themed outcomes and measures (or equivalent)
Care leavers in well paid secure work.	Average income of care leavers compared to generic average salary Number of care leavers in receipt of in work benefits

## Key partners for this strategic priority

- Kirklees Virtual School
- Kirklees Employment and Skills Partnership
- Social Care
- Fostering, Kinship and Special Guardianship Order Services
- Care Leavers Service
- C&K Careers
- Education provider
- Human Resources
- Employer representatives
- Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service
- Go Higher
- Post 16 strategic learning lead

## Strategic priority 2: Ensuring that our children in care and care leavers have safe, stable, comfortable homes with access to continuing care and support

### Vision

Our ambition is to provide the right homes for all our children looked after, to have an offer of family based, residential, and supported living within Kirklees that meets their needs. To ensure proactive support is available to children and their carers to keep their living arrangements stable. To have a range of high quality and supportive home and housing options for care leavers to encourage our young people into independence.

### What is the challenge?

We know that nationally sufficiency is an issue. There are not enough foster carers in Kirklees to meet the needs of our children. In relation to the demographic of our children in care, they are predominantly over the age of 12, and our existing cohort of carers do not all express a preference for and/or have the confidence to care for this age of child. Our shortage of appropriately motivated and available carers able to meet their needs results in an increased reliance on the costly private sector, often out of area.

A small number of our most vulnerable children and young people are living in solo or occasionally unregulated placements (where we ensure enhanced oversight, support, and review). We need to invest in our sufficiency offer to ensure children do not enter residential care as a result of a shortage of available and suitable fostering provision, and do not enter unregulated care or external residential provision outside of Kirklees as a result of a lack of provision.

We recognise that the stability of living arrangements is a challenge. Young people experience multiple transitions because of bridging placements following breakdown until a more permanent and secure arrangement is made. When children have experienced a home breakdown, we know that it can be harder to find them another long-term stable home. We need to invest in the arrangements we do have to prevent them breaking down, preventing movement for the children.

Poor and delayed planning and lack of provision can mean that care leavers are living in unsuitable accommodation, or that there are limited options available to them when they move on to independence.

### What we will do

We know we need to do more to meet the housing and support needs of young people in Kirklees.

We need to improve the housing offer that the local authority provides for its care leavers. There is also a need to improve pathways and options to ensure a suitable and good quality solution is found for all care leavers that reduces/removes the need to place in temporary accommodation at the point of leaving care.

A range of options including supported housing (where care leavers may not be ready for independent living), plus suitable social housing and private rented housing options need to be enhanced. Work is taking place with Children’s Services, Housing Solutions and Homes & Neighbourhoods around clarifying the home starter fund grant entitlement for care leavers and wraparound tenancy support when care leavers secure their first council tenancy.

We have recognised the need for further developments to achieve our vision and this has resulted in the development of:

- The Sufficiency Strategy (updated 2024) with six priorities and a clear plan to deliver:
  - Where possible children in care live in family homes.
  - Expand our Fostering Services to deliver more fostering homes for our children.
  - Ensure our Residential Children’s Home deliver outstanding care.
  - Ensure that our children and young people have access to a spectrum of home options to best meet their individual needs.
  - Build and develop our local relationship with the independent sector through effective market engagement to develop and manage a mixed economy of provision.
  - Ensure that we can respond to urgent/crisis need for accommodation for children and young people by developing our in-house and commissioned provision designed to offer immediate access where required.
- A Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy (2024-27) with six objectives and a clear plan as to how to address them:
  - Objective 1 – To improve our recruitment and marketing approaches to maximise our connections with prospective foster carers in our area.
  - Objective 2 – Creating fostering provision which meets the needs of our looked after population.
  - Objective 3 – Use performance data to track and improve key performance indicators related to fostering sufficiency.
  - Objective 4 – Ensure we have a competitive remuneration and reward package for our foster carers.
  - Objective 5 – Develop a wraparound support model for foster carers.
  - Objective 6 – Improve our long-term and short-term fostering stability, minimising the number of moves for our children so they can remain in their home till independence when appropriate.

## What success will look like

Outcome statement	Outcome measure
Children and young people will live locally with carers that can meet their needs.	Increased number of internal foster carers
	Reduced number of external residential homes
	Reduced number of unregulated arrangements
	More children living within Kirklees/20 miles of Kirklees

Children and young people will live in stable homes.

Improved performance around stability

Reduced numbers of same day notice and 28 day notice

Children and young people will have access to the support they need to maintain a safe and stable home.

Reduced placement disruption and a decrease of placement breakdowns and moves for our children and young people.

Foster carers and children's homes care staff to have direct access to the Emotional Wellbeing Service for advice and guidance and be offered relevant and high-quality training and support to assist them in their role of caring for our children and young people.

Playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy and dialectical behaviour therapy training to be implemented across all our internal children's homes by March 2025.

Care leavers will have access to a variety of housing options that meets their needs.

Reduced numbers of young people in temporary accommodation

Increased numbers of staying put arrangements

Increased numbers of supported lodgings carers providing homes

## Key partners for this strategic priority

- The Emotional Wellbeing Service
- White Rose Regional Commissioning
- Children's Commissioning Team
- Kirklees Housing Solutions Service
- Kirklees Homes and Neighbourhoods
- Registered providers (housing associations) in Kirklees

## Strategic priority 3: Ensuring that our children and young have positive relationships and have opportunities to engage with positive, fun activities

### Vision

Our aim is that all of our children and young people have opportunity to build and maintain positive relationships with trusted adults.

We wish for these relationships to be stable and consistent, with someone the child or young person feels is approachable, someone they can rely on, feel safe with, and relate to, in order trust and understanding can be built. In turn, it is hoped the young person will feel they can be honest and open, share positive and negative emotions and experiences with their trusted adult, and receive support and empathy from trusted adults when needed. Where appropriate and possible, we wish to support our children and young people to have family time and maintain relationships with family.

We believe that these relationships are fundamental to emotional, social, and cognitive development and provide our children and young people with the support, guidance, a sense of security, and encouragement they need to thrive, enhancing their development and wellbeing. We wish for our care experienced young people to have the same opportunities for friendship as their peers, and to support positive friendships.

Our ambition is that all our children and young people have access to, and take part in positive activities, fun experiences, and hobbies they wish to pursue.

We recognise that all children and young people are individuals with different interests and who enjoy different things therefore, we aim to ensure they have access to a range of opportunities in order they can access something they are interested in and enjoy.

### What is the challenge?

As a result of adverse childhood experiences often faced by care experienced young people, it can often take time for them to trust and build positive relationships. Due to capacity issues of various professional roles, time allowed to build relationships may be limited, and it is not always possible to match young people with professional workers to whom they can relate.

There are limited numbers of Independent Visitors who provide a valuable role in creating positive relationships with our looked after children and young people.

The care system can create artificial barriers to care experienced young people making and keeping friends.

Due to current budget pressures the local authority is unable fund events and activities for care experienced young people. There are limited external funding opportunities local authorities are eligible to apply for, particularly for this purpose.



## What we will do

- Support opportunities for our children and young people to build and maintain positive relationships with trusted adults.
- Ensure children looked after maintain relationships with professionals when moving accommodation/placement, particularly from children residential homes.
- Promote Independent Visitor involvement for our children and young people where relevant and appropriate and ensure there are sufficient Independent Visitors available to meet demand.
- Recognise the importance of positive friendships and support and facilitate these where possible.
- Identify and promote opportunities for our children and young people to experience fun, including events and activities organised and held by the local authority, partners, organisations, and voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations.
- Support our young people to be involved in events and activities, including extra-curricular activities.
- Offer fun, creative sessions to be held in the care leavers hubs for our children and young people.
- Raise and secure funds for events, activities, and enrichment opportunities for our care experienced children and young people.
- Organise events and activities for our children and young people.

## What success will look like

<b>Outcome statement</b>	<b>Outcome measure</b>
We want our children growing up in our care to have secure and trusted relationships with trusted adults.	To ensure that all children seeking independent visitors are matched within eight weeks of request
Children and young people growing up in our care will have access to a range of age-appropriate clubs and activities and are encouraged and supported to engage in extra-curricular activities to enrich their childhood and broaden their positive social networks.	The number of children and young people registered with club and activities eg. cadets, scouts, sports clubs, drama groups etc.

## Key partners for this strategic priority

- Children's Rights Team
- Fostering
- Independent Reviewing Officer Service
- Virtual School
- Huddersfield Town Foundation Trust
- Third Sector Leaders Forum
- Residential Service
- Kirklees Fostering Network
- Children Looked After Teams
- Care Leaver Service
- Independent Visitor Scheme

## Strategic priority 4: Listening and responding to the voice of our children, young people, and care leavers

### Vision

We want our children, young people, and care leavers to be supported to express their views, wishes and feelings and for their views, wishes and feelings to be considered when decisions are made that affect their lives. We will work in partnership with children, young people, and care leavers to ensure they have a voice and influence over the design, delivery and review of the services that are provided to them.

Our vision is that our children, young people, and care leavers have meaningful opportunities to participate in the design, delivery and review of the services they may use in their care journey.

This means that services will create safe spaces for children to communicate their thoughts, wishes and feelings. A clear audience of decision-makers will listen and respond in accessible and timely ways. Children, young people, families, and colleagues can tell one another about the outcomes of their participation.

Our actions to include and act upon children's communications, ideas and suggestions will be co-ordinated, embedded, and impactful across the partnership.

We all will welcome children and young people's ideas, and where possible act on what is shared and make a difference.

## What is the challenge?

- To ensure we see children and young people with care experience as 'more than' this one element of their whole. Opportunities and experiences to participate should extend beyond those of this workstream. The opportunities and offers should be collaboratively created with children and young people.
- To ensure colleagues and partners understand the Lundy Model of participation and how they can implement it on personal practice, operational (as a team/service area), and strategic levels.
- To secure a commitment from all partners to plan, implement, analyse, and evaluate activities or opportunities committed to in this plan.
- To meaningfully resource opportunities for participation (funding, staff time, venues, expenses, reward, and recognition).
- To prioritise participation activities, including recruitment, and ensure time is allocated to doing this.
- Securing young people's motivation and engagement. There has to be a 'pull' for young people to join in. Opportunities will need to be fun, understandable, welcoming, and interesting to peak initial interest. Staff with ongoing relationships will need to encourage/guide children and young people to join in. Adults will need to adapt and evolve to enable children to be meaningfully involved.
- To agree on feeding back progress to the children and young people who have participated, at agreed times, in understandable ways.
- To ensure positive outcomes and best practice is shared further than Kirklees and becomes connected to regional and national campaigns and initiatives, increasing overall impact. These mechanisms will also require scoping, time, and development.

## What we will do

- The Our Voice Team will provide 'up-skilling' sessions to expand and promote participation based on the Lundy Model of child participation and its application to practice. This offer will be available across our partnership.
- Ensure our internal children's services have a clear self-assessment of and self-evaluation of current participation practice and are supported to provide a plan on a page of how they will collect and implement service users feedback annually.
- Create a collaborative and clear plan about what priorities we will work with children and young people to address as part of this workstream. Why we are doing it, what we are asking, the possible outcomes and a time-framed arrangement for acting on/feeding back/sharing.
- Pool resources (places, people, equipment, funding, skills) to ensure we deliver the plan and prevent waste/duplication.
- Provide a named participation lead in each service and team who can lead/steer projects and recruitment.

- Work in partnership with managers and staff on voice and influence projects and provide advice and guidance to social care staff and external partners to enable the voice and influence of children, young people, and care leavers to influence service improvement.
- Facilitate new 'Total Respect' training which will be delivered by care experienced young people for elected members, Kirklees Parenting Board and social care staff.
- Support members of the Care Leavers Council to deliver training for foster carers as part of the 'Skills to Foster' programme.
- Train and support youth representatives to be members of the Kirklees Parenting Board and facilitate an annual takeover by the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum.
- Support regular meetings between the Head of Corporate Parenting and Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum and partnership projects developed with the Kirklees parenting priorities operational leads.
- Supporting care experienced young people to participate in the recruitment and selection of senior social care staff and the commissioning panels of social care services.

## What success will look like

Outcome statement	Outcome measure
We will be able to evidence the overall reach and demographics of children and young people who have been involved in voice, influence and participation projects over the year. This should also include children with care experience who have been involved in wider Our Voice Team projects.	Annual report/summary. The total number of contacts/young people involved
Children and young people have been given promise documentation by their social worker and the promise has been explained.	% children and young people who report that their current social worker has given them promise information and explained it to them. (Independent Reviewing Officer's data collected quarterly)
Children, young people, and care leavers thoughts, wishes and feelings are central to their plans developed by services	% children and young people's plans that evidence that the child has been meaningfully involved in their development and review (Independent Reviewing Officer's data collected quarterly)
We will be able to evidence the networks and partners that children and young people have been introduced to/are aware of through projects and this priority.	We will be able to evidence the networks and partners that children and young people have been introduced to/are aware of through projects and this priority.
We will be able to evidence our commitment to working alongside and collaboratively with children and young people who have care experience in the design, development, and review of our services.	Total number of hours direct work completed

We will be able to evidence the number of staff who have accessed Lundy/participation up-skilling.	Total number of staff who have completed the training
We will be clear on how council services who work with children and young people are to gather feedback and respond/action changes.	Self-evaluation frameworks and plan on a page Named participation 'champ' in teams/services Clear project plans, outcome reports and feedback mechanisms documenting impact
Children and young people can tell us what difference their involvement has made.	Universal participation measure Case studies Project evaluation
Kirklees has a voice in regional and national participation forums.	Comms and involvement in national consultations or projects (where manageable and appropriate) Connections with voice, influence and participation services from other areas and possible collaborations.

## Key partners for this strategic priority

- Children in Care Council
- Care Leavers Forum
- Children's Rights Team
- Independent Reviewing Officer Service
- Care Leavers Service
- Children Looked After Teams
- Virtual School
- Residential Service
- Kirklees Active Leisure
- Kirklees Youth Alliance/community partners representation (Huddersfield Town/Fresh Futures)
- Housing and Neighbourhoods (Children and Young People's Team)
- Kirklees College/education reps/University of Huddersfield
- Participation lead from key council services
- Democracy
- Health (Locala, Kirklees Keep in Mind, Emotional Health and Wellbeing Partnership)
- Career based services (Calderdale & Kirklees Careers, Real Employment)
- Lead commissioner for Care Services

- Safeguarding Children Partnership representative
- Colleagues specialising in special education needs and disabilities

## Strategic priority 5: Ensuring that our children, young people, and care leavers grow up healthy and have support to maximise their physical and emotional wellbeing

### Vision

For our children and young people to have similar levels of health and wellbeing as their peers, regardless of exposure to adverse childhood experiences, and to feel happy, settled, and safe.

In Kirklees, we are committed to improving the health and welfare outcomes and life chances of the children and young people who are in our care. We want everything the best parents want for their children:

- That they are happy and healthy both physically and emotionally, this includes the promotion of physical, emotional, and mental health and taking necessary action to promote health and address any identified health needs at the earliest possible opportunity.
- That we keep them safe and protected from harm and exploitation.
- That we support them as they transition into adulthood and that we prepare them for independence.
- We are ambitious for our children; we want them to achieve their potential regardless of health and/or additional needs, and we want them to be able to participate in decisions which affect their lives.
- We want our children to work with us and, along with parents and carers, shape the future health services we offer.
- We will seek to ensure that professionals who work with children looked after and care leavers understand the impact of trauma and provide support as required.
- We will seek to ensure that Kirklees children looked after placed out of area, including in residential settings, are receiving high quality service provision.

We will strengthen partnerships between health, social care, and other partner agencies, removing barriers and duplication, prompting swift solutions to promote positive health outcomes.

### What is the challenge?

#### Health Inequalities

We need to tackle existing health inequalities for children looked after and care experienced young people. Life expectancy and the likelihood of developing physical and mental health problems are strongly linked to experience. Where you live, access to services and how you are treated – especially in the early part of your life, can amplify the risks of health inequalities. Many children looked after and care leavers have experienced abuse, neglect, or

other forms of trauma. The NHS Long Term Plan (2019) recognises that “*the most vulnerable children, who need extra help from the state to safeguard their wellbeing, do not reliably get the support or access to the services that their needs demand. This results in poorer health outcomes, particularly for care leavers.*” This has significant implications for the National Health Service (NHS) both in terms of worse health outcomes (Murray et al, 2020) but also how the NHS responds and understands these health needs. It is crucial that barriers are identified and addressed so that children looked after and care leavers can access and receive the health care and support offered by the specialist Children Looked After teams, health professionals and linked partners, to reach and maintain optimal health outcomes. This will enhance their journey into adulthood and promote their future wellbeing.

### **Impact of being Looked After on mental health**

We know that approximately 50% of mental health problems start before the age of 15 and approximately 75% before 18 years of age. Nine out of ten children who have experienced abuse or neglect at a young age will develop a mental health difficulty by the age of 18, and care experienced young people consistently have higher rates of mental health difficulties than the general population. Care experienced children and young people can feel discouraged to ask for and accept emotional wellbeing support for fear of being labelled as ‘having a mental health problem’, which is why easy to access to emotional wellbeing support for our children and young people is essential.

We know that undiagnosed and unsupported mental health issues can potentially lead to increased risks of substance misuse and feelings of loneliness and isolation. Regular assessment of the emotional and mental health of children and young people via statutory health assessments and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire is therefore vital.

Children and young people with poor mental health are at greater risk of instability in care. Foster carers and children’s homes care staff report managing a range of significant emotional and behavioural difficulties and research suggests children and young people with disruptive and hyperactive behaviours are at high risk of their living arrangements breaking down, as their caregivers can struggle to cope. We know that multiple moves can re-trigger experiences of separation and loss and lead to mental health difficulties and other unwanted outcomes such as poor education attainment and the misuse of alcohol and substances. It is therefore vital our children and young people experience a supported, stable, and caring home life so they can feel settled and confident enough to continue to develop and thrive.

### **Fluctuating cohort of Children Looked After**

The constantly fluctuating number of children looked after and care leavers results in a challenge in meeting statutory health assessments and ensuring the health needs of children looked after and care leavers are met. This is particularly relevant to Kirklees children placed out of area, children placed in Kirklees from other Local Authority areas, and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children who quickly transition to care leaver status due to their age.

## **What we will do**

- Seek to redress the issues of inequality and disadvantage experienced by this group of children and young people.
- Support Emotional Wellbeing by:

- Exploring “what does this child need?” rather than “what is wrong?” Use a Formulation approach to bring together information in a restorative way with families and professionals to better understand the broader context of strengths and specific areas of needs.
  - Providing clear information and communication about the emotional wellbeing support and interventions being offered by the Emotional Wellbeing Service to our children, young people, caregivers, and professionals.
  - Applying the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire to inform and shape the support and goal-based interventions we provide to our children and young people and their caregivers.
  - Considering a referral to core Child & Adult Mental Health Service for a diagnostic assessment (where applicable) for all our children and young people with a very high Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire score.
  - Incorporating the six principles of trauma-informed practice when planning and implementing support systems and plans.
- Increase the stability of our children and young people’s home life, living accommodation and permanent settings by ensuring information about their physical, emotional, behavioural, and mental health needs is fully gathered to inform best matching to their homes and caregivers and that practitioners can access appropriate services, including the Emotional Wellbeing Service to ensure support and intervention is identified and planned (using a Formulation approach) at the outset of a move and/or new arrangement if required.
  - Offer support and training to our foster carers and children’s homes care staff:
    - Support the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of our children and young people by offering a full training and support package to the caregivers who look after them.
    - Train and support our children’s homes staff in ‘playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy’ and ‘dialectical behaviour therapy’ skills to better support children and young people to make positive choices and changes in their lives.
  - Seek to ensure children are supported to live healthy lifestyles, in terms of healthy eating, exercise, alcohol, smoking, substances, sexual health, etc. People who care for children will be supported in terms of training and advice.
  - Ensure the views of children, young people, care leavers, and their carers/advocates are captured to influence service design, service delivery and any future commissioning of health services.
  - Review the current health service offer to enhance care leaver provision and develop our care leavers pathway including work to improve transition from children to adult services to ensure continuity of physical, emotional and mental health, thus supporting better health outcomes.
  - Support our practitioners and caregivers to enable our children and young people to develop their sense of identity by contributing to and carrying out life story work. By understanding and making sense of their early life experiences, caregivers can help develop attachments and stability.
  - Work in collaboration with partners from the West Yorkshire Children in Care Health Group to reduce unwarranted travel time and use opportunities to share resources when working with Children Looked After across West Yorkshire.



- Seek to ensure that health care providers comply with statutory requirements including quality standards as set by the Royal Colleges 2020 and NICE Guidance 2021.
- Use data and intelligence from health assessments and other sources to identify trends and emerging needs of Children Looked After.
- Be responsive of any emerging health needs / themes including children looked after with Child & Adult Mental Health Service needs; Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children/Separated Children, children looked after with Special Educational Needs; children looked after with complex health needs, children looked after within the Youth Justice System.
- Contribute to the multi-agency response to the recommendations of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel Safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings (2023).

## What success will look like

Outcome statement	Outcome measure
Kirklees children looked after placed in and out of area, and children looked after accommodated in Kirklees from other authorities, will have had a health assessment as set out in statutory guidance and be enjoying or working towards their optimal state of health and wellbeing.	<p>Initial health assessments will be completed within 20 working days.</p> <p>Review health assessments will be completed within statutory timescales.</p>
We will ensure direct access to emotional wellbeing and mental health support and intervention for our children and young people.	<p>No waiting lists to access the Emotional Wellbeing Service.</p> <p>An Emotional Wellbeing Service 'Lead Practitioner' for each children's service area for direct advice and assistance to young people and practitioners.</p> <p>Clear communication and information about the Emotional Wellbeing Service support and services being offered, including referrals to Child &amp; Adult Mental Health Service for assessment and treatment for children and young people with persistent and significant mental health issues or disorders, and any that requires an urgent response by the Crisis Team.</p> <p>Use of the 6 P's and a strengths and trauma informed approach evidenced in all our communication and written work with our</p>

children and young people and their caregivers.

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We will improve our children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing and support positive behaviour change.

Meeting and monitoring the agreed paired outcomes for our children and young people South and West Yorkshire Foundation Partnership Trust and Children Social Care Services via the Emotional Wellbeing Service Monthly performance meetings and Homes for Children Board and Tableau Dashboard.

An increase in the completion rate of our Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire's: to rise well above the national average rate. A reduction in 'High' Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire scores and 'High impact effect': to fall below the national average rate.

Reduced disruption in the home and a decrease of home breakdowns and moves for our children and young people.

Foster carers and children's homes care staff to have direct access to the Emotional Wellbeing Service for advice and guidance and be offered relevant and high-quality training and support to assist them in their role of caring for our children and young people.

'Playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy' and 'dialectical behaviour therapy' training to be implemented across all our internal children's homes by March 2025.

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We will ensure that children are supported to lead healthy lifestyles with regard to healthy eating, exercise, alcohol, substances and sexual health.

Families, carers, and staff who support children will receive appropriate training, guidance and support to enable this.

Quality Assurance e.g. monitoring of children's homes.

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We will seek to ensure that all our children and young people are supported with relevant and meaningful life story work to support their understanding about their histories and identities

The 'Kirklees Life Story Work: This is Me' guidance and approach to be utilised by all practitioners working with our children and young people.

All our looked after children and young people to have evidence of life story work recorded

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on their Liquid Logic files at various stages of their care journey.

Life Story Work completion to be monitored via the Tableau dashboard.

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Our care experienced young people will receive a smooth and timely transition to adult health services where applicable.

Clear procedures are in place so the relevant professionals can prepare our young people for the transition to adult health services, especially those identified with long-term health needs – by March 2025

Clear communication and information materials on transition to adult services are available for all young people and their caregivers to access – by March 2025.

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Specialist health teams will support multi-agency partners to reduce health inequalities for children looked after and care leavers via improved accessibility to the specialist health team for advice and signposting to services that meet their needs.

Monitoring of access to dental care

Monitoring of immunisation rates

Monitored via Children Looked After reviews

Care Leaver Health Histories will be provided to all Care Leavers

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The views of children, young people, care leavers, and their carers/advocates will be sought, captured and considered within service design, service delivery and commissioning arrangements of health support for children in care.

The Children Looked After Health action plan will demonstrate how views have been sought and applied at the Parenting Board as well as the Data and Outcomes for Children Looked After group meetings.

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We will analyse the data and intelligence from health assessments, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire etc to better understand the needs of children looked after, inform priorities and shape provision in order to improve the health of children in care.

Monitoring of action plan will take place at the Data and Outcomes for children looked after group meetings.

Data and intelligence will inform the Kirklees Joint Strategic Assessment.

Summary of data and intelligence and resulting action plan will be reported in Children Looked After Health annual report.

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## Key partners for this strategic priority

- Designated Doctor
- Designated Nurse – Safeguarding and Children Looked After

- Children's Commissioning Lead – Integrated Care Board
- The Emotional Wellbeing Service
- South West Yorkshire Foundation Partnership Trust
- Children's Integrated Commissioning Lead – Children and Families
- Integrated Care Board Dental Lead
- Integrated Care Board Optometry Lead
- Consultant in Public Health
- Whitehouse GP Surgery
- Wellbeing / CAMHS Team Local Authority
- Change Grow Live Substance Misuse service
- Named Nurse (Locala)
- Integrated Care Board Designated Clinical Officer

## Strategic priority 6: Developing our Care Leavers partnership to deliver success for life

### Vision

We aim to support all young people to move from care to independence whilst benefiting from a strong and wide partnership providing a community of support that recognises the needs, aspirations, and potential of every care leaver in our authority. Having promoted council wide recognition and understanding of the challenges that face many of our care leavers through the authority adopting a motion recognising that care experience as a protective characteristic, we will champion opportunities to promote the strengths and resilience of our care leavers within our communities. Our vision is that our care leavers recognise and access meaningful support through a continuously developing commitment from Kirklees parents and our ambassador network.

### What is the challenge?

Nationally, outcomes for care leavers continue to remain much worse than for their counterparts in the general population. It is well recorded that care experienced people face significant barriers that impact them throughout their lives and can face discrimination and stigma across housing, health, education, relationships, employment and in the criminal justice system. Many care experienced young people experience 'enforced' moves from their childhood homes at a relatively young age whilst the general population of children within families remain at home within their families into the mid to late 20's. Some of our care leavers will have limited support from family increasing their social isolation and limiting their support networks, mentors and positive adult guidance.

Many services are designed with limiting criteria and care leavers can often find that services and support they experienced as children in care are no longer accessible or that their eligibility

and entitlement has ended. As many support services reduce in size and ability due to financial pressure offers of support can be further reduced.

## What we will do

- We will expand our support and delivery model to care leavers through further developing our hubs of services with key partners delivering a 'one stop shop' service for our care leavers.
- We will equip our personal advisors with the necessary training and access to professional specialist advice and support on areas relevant to our care leavers.
- We will broaden our offer of support to care leavers through building upon our Care Leavers Service Ambassador scheme to enable our hubs to provide a range of socialisation and support opportunities as well as information, advice, and guidance.
- We will work closely with local partners to ensure that sufficient accommodation is available that meets the needs of young people and develop a guarantor scheme to support care leavers establish their own homes and independence.
- We will further promote 'Staying Put' for children looked after who are in foster care and reaching 18 and develop our 'Staying Close' offer within our Kirklees residential services.
- Create a multi-agency support service for care leavers who are planning a family or who already have children.
- Increase participation and engagement with care leavers to develop our partnerships.
- Engage care leavers in the running and delivery of services appropriate for them and enable care leaver led activities and 'drop in's' to support positive social networking.
- We will work within the council and with partners to broaden opportunities for work tasters, training and employment supporting the concept of the 'Kirklees family firm'.

## What success will look like

Outcome statement	Outcome measure
Care leavers are in touch and receiving services.	100% of care leavers in touch with their Personal Advisor every eight weeks
Care leavers are supported to develop meaningful plans to help them prepare for the future.	100% care leavers with and up to date pathway plan
Care leavers understand their pathway plans and find them useful.	Feedback from young people at leaving care review and through interactive file audits
Have somewhere safe to live after they leave care.	100% care leavers in suitable accommodation
Care leavers report they feel supported to achieve their personal goals.	Pathway plan reviews evidence good progress and pride at achieving personal goals
Fewer children of care leavers have statutory social work involvement, fewer pre-birth assessments are undertaken.	Mosaic reports to evidence a 'turn in the curve'. Care leavers voice group feedback experiences of positive support

More care leavers are engaged in education or employment opportunities.

Mosaic reports evidence a turn in the curve. Pathway plans evidence progress and outcomes

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## Key partners for this strategic priority

- Children in Care Council
- Care Leavers Forum
- Personal Advisors
- Residential Services
- Fostering Services
- Kirklees Fostering Network
- Employment and Skills Services
- Kirklees Council Human Resources
- Health partners
- Housing, Homes and Neighbourhoods
- Third sector partners
- Corporate business partners
- Elected members
- West Yorkshire Police
- Department for Works and Pensions
- Welfare Benefits Services
- Kirklees Adult Services
- Calderdale & Kirklees Careers

## Elected members Kirklees parenting responsibilities

All our elected members automatically hold corporate parenting responsibilities. There are many different ways in which elected members can promote their Kirklees parenting responsibilities.

Children's Social Work Services will support elected members in understanding their role as Kirklees Parents through providing training sessions as a key part of the induction for all councillors.

## Effective Kirklees parents

- Have a clear understanding and awareness of the issues for children looked after and care leavers in the authority area including those placed out of area.
- Are able to ask questions and constructively challenge outcomes for children looked after and care leavers.

- Have effective communication with children looked after and care leavers and their services.
- Ensure that children and young people have a say in how decisions are made about the services that affect them and that they are able to influence those decisions positively.
- Ensure that they are familiar with our ‘pledge’ and challenge whether the council, as Kirklees parent, is keeping the pledge.
- Ask how all elements of council business and change have an impact for children looked after and care leavers.
- Make connections and links between council plans, strategies and decision-making impacting on children looked after and care leavers
- Consistently ask in decision making and meetings impacting on children looked after **“Would this be good enough for my own child?”**.

Whilst all elected members have Kirklees parenting responsibility, the tasks that need to be undertaken will differ according to the role(s) that individual members have taken on. The different levels of responsibility can be summarised as follows:

### **Universal responsibilities (level 1)**

All councillors must ask themselves:

- Do I understand why children need to be looked after, and the legal and policy framework that governs this?
- Am I aware of the governance arrangements for corporate parenting within my council?
- Do I know about the profile of the children looked after by the council – and the outcomes they are achieving compared with other local children?
- Can I be sure that we are providing the best care possible for our children looked after and care-leavers? Would it be good enough for my child?
- Am I aware of our local promise to children looked after and how I can contribute towards fulfilling it?
- Does the council have a Corporate Parenting Strategy and, if so, what are the key points?
- Am I taking responsibility for promoting the welfare of children looked after and care leavers in all my work for the council – and in my other capacities?
- Are there any celebrations or other events that I can attend in order to demonstrate directly to children and young people in care that I want them to do well?
- Do I know what the most important issues are for our children looked after and care leavers?

### **Targeted responsibilities (level 2)**

For councillors who undertake visits to children’s homes, are part of the Children’s Services scrutiny arrangements and/or are members of the Kirklees Parenting Board, their role will be more extensive. In addition to the above, they will need to ask themselves:

- Are the right structures and systems in place in order for my council to be an effective corporate parent, and are all the right partners involved?
- Am I up to date on current (and proposed) government expectations regarding the service to children looked after and care leavers?

- Do I have access to both qualitative and quantitative information on the service, and enough knowledge to understand and evaluate this information?
  - Do I know how well my council is doing in comparison with other councils, and our own past performance?
  - Are there sound mechanisms within my council for hearing and responding to the views of looked after children, care leavers and their parents/carers?
  - Do I have a good picture of which needs we are meeting well and which we are failing to meet?
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- Is there an action plan across the council and involving partner agencies to improve the service and to ensure it responds to changing needs?
  - Do I know what our children looked after and care leavers think about the service we are providing?

### **Specialist responsibilities (level 3)**

Finally, there will be key roles where Kirklees parenting is at the heart of an individual's role. The Lead Member for Children, Young People and Families, Chair of Children's Scrutiny Board and the Chair of the Kirklees Parenting Board will need to work closely with the Director of Children's Services and Head of Service for Corporate Parenting to ask themselves, in addition to the above:

- Are we providing both political and operational leadership in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children looked after and care leavers?
- Are effective governance arrangements in place to implement any decisions regarding children looked after and care leavers across the authority and partner agencies?
- Have we undertaken an in-depth analysis of the needs of the council's care population and how far services are meeting those needs so as to inform future action?
- Is there a review process to ensure adaptation to changing needs?
- Have we made sure that the strategic plans of the children's services authority and joint plans with partner agencies meet the needs of children looked after and care leavers?
- Are we up to date with emerging research findings and new initiatives that should inform the direction of services?
- Do we have strong links with the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum and does that body have all the support it needs to be effective?

## **Link members to our children's homes**

Within Kirklees we provide a number of children's residential homes which provide a mixture of specialist care in group living settings. All of our homes are registered with Ofsted as the regulatory body for providing children's residential care services and each have arrangements for independent scrutiny and oversight as required by regulations.



Our Kirklees Parenting Board also has a function to oversee and support and champion our children's residential homes and of course the young people supported by them.

## Board members supporting strategic priority themes

Within our Kirklees Parenting Strategy, we have set out six priority themes that will provide a focus for services and partners to ensure that there is continuous effort to improve key outcomes for our children looked after and care leavers. Each priority theme will be led by a council officer or equivalent manager within a relevant partner and work to deliver the outcomes set out in our strategy. Our Kirklees Parenting Board arrangements include for the regular review, challenge, and support for these priorities, and this will also be supported through individual 'priority champion' board members.

The Kirklees Parenting Board members priority champion role will involve individual board members from the Kirklees Parenting Board working with the operational lead for their identified priority theme. The priority champion will provide support and challenge on progress, and support the operational lead in promoting the priority within relevant forums including committees, meetings, decision making forums and wider council and community events as relevant. The Kirklees Parenting Board priority champion will receive updates from the operational lead as agreed and prior to reports being presented to the Kirklees Parenting Board.

## Supporting officers

Kirklees Parenting Board supporting council officers have a crucial role to play in ensuring that services are developed and delivered to a high standard and that they inform elected members and members of the Kirklees Parenting Board of the progress of the plan and any challenges that are being faced. They need to know about the children who are in our care and strive at all times to deliver the highest quality service.

They are responsible for advising the board and ensuring that any agreed actions are carried out as well as:

- Reporting to the Kirklees Parenting Board on performance relating to children in care and care leavers.
- Reporting on information relating to fostering, adoption, and small group home provision.
- Ensuring that Kirklees Parenting Board has all relevant information to ensure that they can provide robust monitoring of services provided to children in care and make decisions based on the most up to date information.

The Head of Service for Corporate Parenting meets with both the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum a minimum of six times a year and will liaise with board member champions to support reporting in each theme to the board.

