

Children and Young People in Care



York's Strategy 2016 – 2020

Including children on the edge of care, those subject to special guardianship orders or arrangement orders, and care leavers.



CITY OF
YORK
COUNCIL

Contents

1.	Foreword	04
2.	The New Strategy on a Page	06
3.	About the Strategy – Ownership, Drivers and Scope	07
4.	Vision, Outcomes and New Strategic Themes	11
5.	Priority Actions and Projects	16
6.	Milestones, Measures and Monitoring	24
	Annexes	25
A.	Progress Since the Last Strategy	25
B.	The Views of Children and Young People in Care	30
C.	York’s Guarantee to Children and Young People in Care	33
D.	Membership of the Strategic Partnership for Children and Young People in Care (January 2016)	34
E.	Strategic Partnership for Children and Young People in Care - Illustrative Scorecard	35

1. Foreword

Welcome to York's new Strategy for Children and Young People In Care. This document also serves as York's Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Since we published our last strategy in 2012, York has made enormous progress in this area. This is outlined in more detail in Annexe A. Some of the highlights include: a significant, safe, reduction in the overall numbers of children in care (below 200 at the time of writing); improvements in the stability of placements; better health and educational outcomes; and excellent work with those leaving care.

Most important of all, the children themselves tell us that, in the vast majority of cases, their placements are of good quality and that they feel safe. The results of the 2015 survey of their views are at Annexe B.

We should be proud of this performance. And yet no organisation or individual who has been associated with the production of this new strategy believes that we should stand still. Far from it, we want to refresh and re-energise our work in this area. Our vision and our strategic goals have not changed but the way we are going to approach them will be very different from 2016 onwards.

For a start, we have widened the scope of this strategy to ensure that it explicitly covers children on the edge of care, children who are adopted, children in the care of other local authorities who are living in York, and children subject to special guardianship orders and child arrangement orders and care leavers.

We recognise and welcome the growth in the numbers of foster carers who are connected through family ties to the children they look after.

'It could be said that our present work with children and young people in care is 'good enough'. But our mantra in York is that 'good enough is not good enough.'

We have also introduced six new strategic themes that are deliberately intended to challenge and inspire everyone who works in this area. We have set ourselves some ambitious new targets and milestones, and have constructed a comprehensive new scorecard that will be regularly monitored.

It could be said that our present work with children and young people in care is 'good enough'. But our mantra in York is that 'good enough is not good enough'. We should be doing much better than this. We want the very best for every single child or young person in care, on the edge of care or leaving care – just as we do for our own children.

This strategy sets out how we will achieve this.



Cllr Jenny Brooks
Executive Member for
Education, Children and
Young People



Steve Stewart
Chief Executive



Jon Stonehouse
Director of Children's
Services, Education
& Skills

2. The New Strategy on a Page

Our vision for York’s children and young people in care is simple: we want our children and young people to have everything that good parents want for their children. In other words: to be happy and healthy, safe and protected, and supported each step of the way to adult life.

Six Strategic Themes: Ambition • Personalisation • Normality • Trust • Accountability • Efficiency

Strategic Outcomes	Priority Projects and Actions
Respect and Involvement	Remodel support services for children and young people in care, ensuring someone is always available on the telephone, and that bureaucracy is minimised for straightforward issues Review all decision-making processes to ensure they are delegated to the most appropriate level, recognising that this may be different for different children, and different foster carers
Good, Safe Placements	Work with local foster carers to develop a new vision for foster care in York encompassing recruitment, roles, responsibilities, remuneration, development and support, recognising that ‘caring’ will always be the most important element of their role Change the way in which we deal with the most complex cases by building increased local capacity Review arrangements for every child placed outside York so that, where it is in their best interests, we can ‘Make York Home’ for everyone
Relationships	Introduce a new protocol for working with birth families, in consultation with the young people affected
Identity	Review all policies and procedures against the new strategic theme of ‘normality’ to ensure that, so far as possible, the experience of children and young people in care does not differentiate them from their peers
Education	Tackle the challenges around educational attainment with increased vigour and purpose Review and implement as appropriate the recommendations of the Rees Centre report about the ‘Educational Progress of Looked After Children’
Health	Introduce a health passport for all children and young people in care which supports their, and their carers’, understanding of their health needs Implement the recommendations arising from the 2015 local review of compliance with statutory guidance for the ‘Health of Looked After Children’
Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health	Construct a profile of the emotional health needs of children and young people in care in order to inform commissioning arrangements across the city Ensure that the principle of early intervention is understood and embedded Understand better if this group of young people is more likely to engage in risky behaviours, including self-harm, and if so, what can be done to help
Moving to Adulthood	Work to ensure that ‘Staying Put’ becomes the norm in York, and is available for every young person who wants to remain with their foster family
Corporate Parenting	Refresh the remit and purpose of the Corporate Parenting Board Introduce a new performance scorecard for children and young people in care that fully exploits the additional functionality of MOSAIC

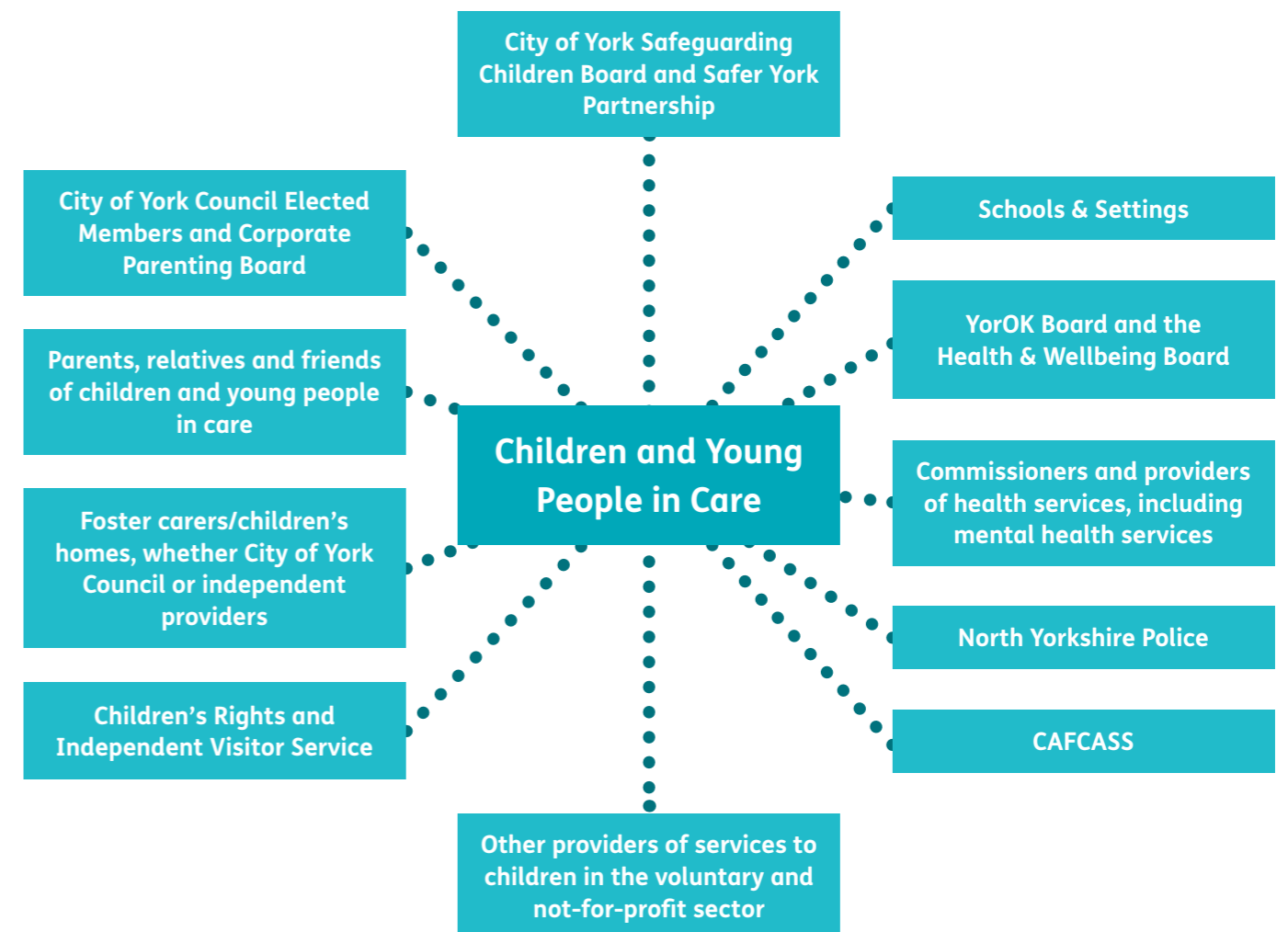
3. About the Strategy - Ownership, Drivers and Scope

Ownership

This strategy has been produced by the Multi-agency Partnership for Children who are Looked After in York (MALAP), now established as the Strategic Partnership for Children and Young People in Care. References to ‘we’ in the document should be taken to mean all of the agencies who are represented on this group.

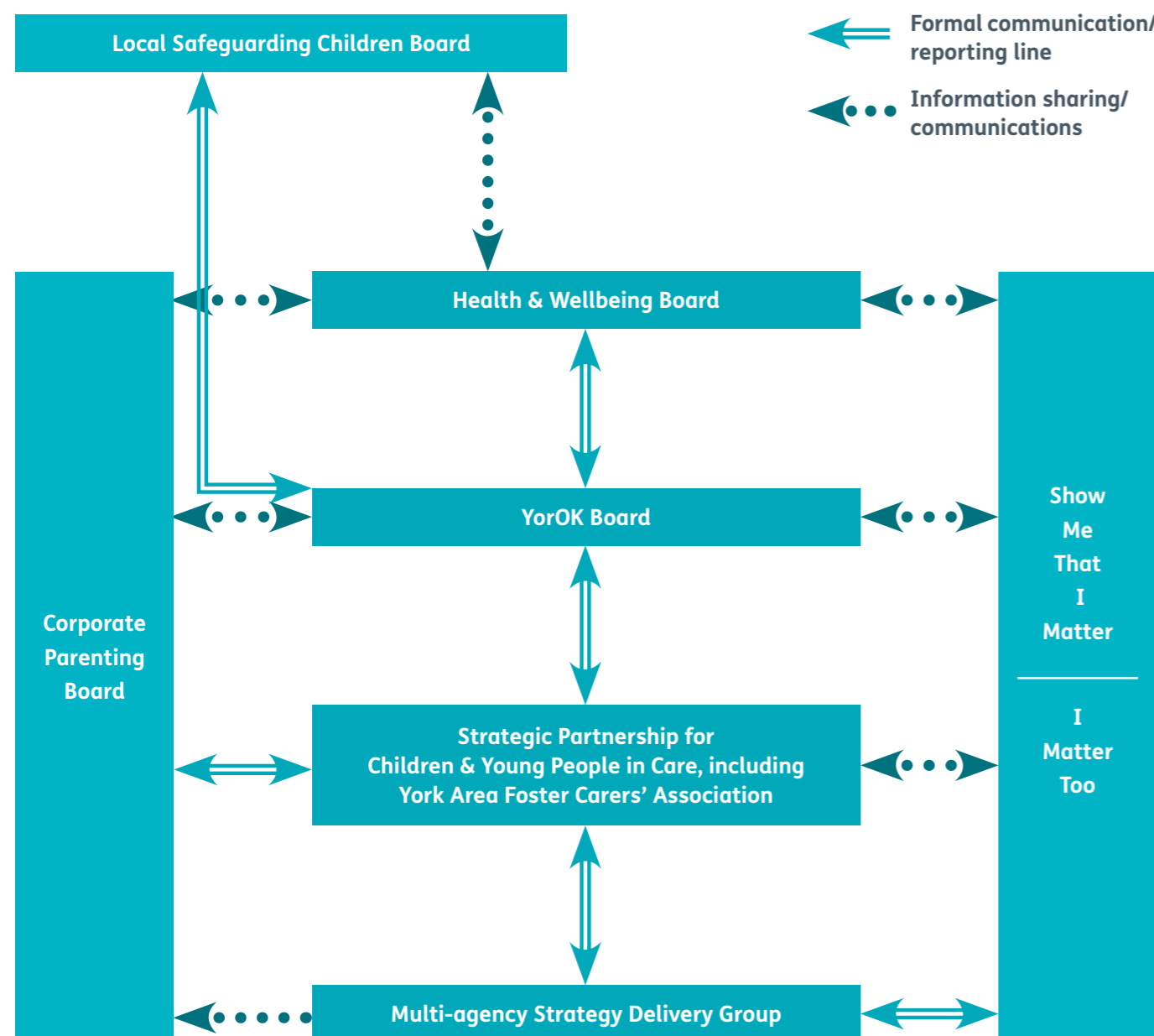
A full list of members, current at the time of writing, is at Annexe E.

The diagram below illustrates the range of agencies involved with children and young people in care in York.



The Strategic Partnership for Children and Young People in Care is answerable to York’s Children’s Trust, known as YorOK, and through them to the Health and Wellbeing Board. Oversight and challenge is also provided by York’s Corporate Parenting Board. Independent scrutiny of all issues affecting the safety of children and young people is provided by the City of York Safeguarding Children Board. The views of children and young people in care are articulated through two panels: Show Me That I Matter, and (for younger children) I Matter Too. Their educational progress is tracked through our Virtual School.

These relationships are illustrated in the diagram below.



Drivers

Although this is a local strategy, throughout its life we will take account of national guidance and best practice. At the time of writing and in preparing this document we have had particular regard to:

- Recent statutory guidance on Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked After Children ¹
- The Rees Centre report into Educational Outcomes for Looked After Children in England ²
- The Children’s Social Care Innovation Programme.

This strategy also sits within a local strategic framework which includes the overarching Children and Young People’s Plan 2016 – 2020 for the city, produced by the YorOK Board. The current plan has been revised at the same time as this strategy; care has therefore been taken to ensure consistency between the two documents. In particular, this strategy is consistent with the theme of ‘early help’ within the new plan. Children and young people in care are identified within the plan as one of the priority groups meriting careful attention.

Other important local strategies and projects which have had a bearing on this one include:

- Make York Home Project
- Sufficiency Strategy
- Early Help Strategy
- NEET Strategy
- CAMHS Strategy and the Local Transformation Plan
- Voice and Involvement Strategy.

The reader is also directed to York’s thematic story boards which set out the city and its partners’ approach to tackling or addressing key priority issues and challenges for children.

These can be found at:
<http://www.yor-ok.org.uk/workforce2014/storyboards.htm>

The views of children and young people in care have been a particularly important influence on this strategy. A summary of the 2015 U Matter Survey is at Annexe B.

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413368/Promoting_the_health_and_well-being_of_looked-after_children.pdf
² http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/EducationalProgressLookedAfterChildrenOverviewReport_Nov2015.pdf

Scope

This strategy is intended to apply to all those children and young people in the care of the City of York Council, including those placed outside the city.

It is also relevant to children placed for adoption, children subject to special guardianship orders or child arrangement orders, and care leavers. In January 2016 there were 196 children and young people in care in York, and approximately 50 families with special guardianship orders or child arrangement orders.

Over the lifetime of this strategy we intend also to find out much more about children in the care of other local authorities who may be living within our boundaries, and to develop our support for this group.

We also regard children on the edge of care as within the scope of this strategy, although the main actions relevant to this group are described in other documents, such as the Early Help Strategy. However, by including them within the scope, we are sending an important signal to all those who work with children and young people in care that our collective responsibilities extend to preventative work, as well as to support for young people after they come into care.

This strategy is therefore considerably broader in scope than its predecessors, in keeping with our ambition to ensure that every child and young person living in York receives the best possible care and support.

‘Over the lifetime of this strategy we intend also to find out much more about children in the care of other local authorities who may be living within our boundaries, and to develop our support for this group.’

4. Vision, Outcomes, and new Strategic Themes

Vision

Our vision remains as follows: we want our children and young people to have everything that good parents want for their children. In other words: to be happy and healthy, safe and protected, and supported each step of the way to adult life. This vision was first articulated in the 2012 strategy and still holds good.

Strategic Outcomes

The previous strategy set out nine strategic outcomes which still provide a useful framework:

1. Respect and Involvement

All those involved with children and young people treat them with respect, listen to their views and are reliable and trustworthy. Children and young people are involved in, and understand, the decisions made about their lives. They know how to get the information, advice and support they need, and how to complain.

2. Good, Safe Placements

Children and young people are in good placements where they feel safe and supported, and can remain for as long as they need to.

They receive information about their placement in advance and are listened to if they have concerns about it at any time. The placement feels like home and provides them with a positive experience of family life or residential care.

3. Relationships

Children and young people are supported to maintain, build and sustain positive relationships with others, including their birth families, siblings in care, carers and their peers.

4. Identity

Children and young people know who they are, why they are looked after and understand their heritage. They feel valued by others, and their individual needs arising from race, culture, religion, sexual orientation or disability are understood and met.

5. Education

Children and young people receive a planned and stable education which enables them to fulfil their educational, social and emotional potential, and to have high aspirations for their future.

6. Health

The health needs of children and young people are assessed and planned for, and they have appropriate access to all the health services they require. They are well and happy, and choosing healthy and active lifestyles.

7. Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health

Children and young people have any need for additional emotional support recognised and addressed, and have the knowledge and skills to achieve emotional stability, resilience and self-confidence.

8. Moving to Adulthood

Children and young people enter adulthood in a planned way, with a home to live in, the skills to look after themselves and the ability to earn a living or continue in education. They feel confident about the future.

9. Corporate Parenting

City of York Council and its partners recognise and act upon their responsibilities to children and young people, particularly in relation to access to leisure and cultural activities, housing, work experience and employment opportunities. They act towards children and young people in care as good parents would in any family.

New Strategic Themes

Although York has made great progress during the period covered by the previous strategy, and can continue to make improvements on a continuous basis, we do not think that such an approach is sufficiently creative or ambitious. We believe the time is right for some fresh thinking and a step change in our work with children and young people in care.

This will require the enthusiastic commitment of all who work with them, not least York's community of foster carers, whose representatives have played a key role in drawing up this strategy.

As well as the vision and the strategic outcomes described above, we will therefore now introduce into our strategic thinking six new strategic themes:

Ambition – ‘good enough’ is not good enough

We want to introduce a fresh spirit of ambition into our work. Are we truly being as ambitious for the children and young people in our care as we would be for our own children? How can we ever be satisfied until health, emotional health, educational and employment outcomes for children and young people in care match those of their peers? We need to ensure there is a spirit of constructive challenge in our debates about the way forward, and to reinvigorate our whole approach.

Personalisation – every child and every family is different

We need to recognise that children and young people in care are not a homogeneous group, and that what works for one child (or family) may not work for another. Their circumstances, backgrounds, capabilities and aspirations may be entirely different. Our policies and practices need to be capable of differentiating between each unique individual – one size does not fit all.

Normality – every child and young person is entitled to a normal, stable, caring family life

We recognise that this word will be challenging for some – this is deliberate. We need to ask ourselves in relation to every policy we introduce, and every process we operate, is this normal? Obviously, being taken into care can never be completely ‘normal’ but, for example, having to go through bureaucratic loops to organise a sleepover with a friend is certainly not normal. Issues such as this one are raised with us very often by the young people themselves – the thing they most dislike is being differentiated from their peers. This will require adjustments to the roles and responsibilities of our most experienced

foster carers, whose involvement and support will be essential, and may be particularly appropriate for those who are already connected to the young people in their care through family ties.

Trust – we need to trust each other better, and young people even more

Many of our systems and processes are designed to minimise risk. However this is sometimes at the expense of commonsense, and certainly of ‘normality’. We also inevitably on occasions retreat behind organisational boundaries. We can not afford to do this in the future – we need to ensure that all decisions relating to children and young people in care are delegated to the level closest to the child wherever possible.

There can be no room for professional preciousness or organisational silos. That said, and bearing in mind the preceding points, the extent to which we can trust each individual child will vary from case to case, and needs sensitive judgement.

We will also only delegate responsibility to experienced foster carers where we can do so safely and in full cognisance of any risks.

Accountability – we need to be clear who is responsible for what

In York we are rightly proud of our multi-agency working. However, sometimes this can be at the expense of complete clarity around accountability. We need to review our present governance structures, as well as job descriptions and protocols for certain professionals, to ensure that accountability is never in doubt. We need to ask ourselves what elements of responsibility are genuinely best shared, and what better owned by a single person or agency? We need in particular to be clearer about the responsibilities of the Strategic Partnership for Children and Young People in Care.

‘...we need to ensure that all decisions relating to children and young people in care are delegated to the level closest to the child wherever possible.’

Efficiency – we have to live within our means

Whilst services for children in York have been prioritised within council and other agencies’ budgets, they cannot be completely immune from the downward pressure on public expenditure. We would be being dishonest if we failed to recognise that

saving money must also be a driver for us over the period covered by this strategy. Many of the improvements we want to see are not expensive in themselves, because they are more about a change of attitude than an elaborate new process. Some, in fact, will potentially be cheaper, because fewer people will need to be involved in individual decisions.

We believe that these six themes will prompt us to remodel significant elements of the current ‘system’ that surrounds children and young people in care in York, as well as carrying on with a process of continuous improvement. This is outlined in more detail in the next chapter.

5. Priority Actions and Projects

This chapter describes the actions and projects that we will undertake as a result of this strategy. They fall into three categories:

- Immediate and significant **priority actions**
- **Continuous improvements** we will continue to undertake throughout the period covered by the strategy
- **Ideas for further consideration**, which will not be pursued immediately but which we want to keep on our radar, to follow up when the time is right or after some further preparatory work.

This document sets out just the main headline objectives: each significant project will have its own action plan which will be overseen by the Strategic Partnership for Children and Young People in Care. Where it is felt necessary, certain projects will also be accompanied by a risk assessment and, if appropriate, expert legal advice. The intention, both in relation to the overall strategy and decisions about individual cases, is to be risk aware, but not risk-averse. All projects will have a named owner within the Strategic Partnership for Children and Young People in Care.

For ease of reference, the actions are shown within the framework of the nine strategic outcomes set out in the previous chapter.

1. Respect and Involvement

Priority actions

- Remodel support services for children and young people in care, ensuring someone is always available on the telephone, and that bureaucracy is minimised for straightforward issues
- Review all decision-making processes to ensure they are delegated to the most appropriate level, recognising that this may be different for different children, and different foster carers

Continuous improvements

- Take steps to improve the consistency/continuity of case workers, recognising that this is a national issue

- Further improve the quality of recording information
- Strengthen the link between the care leavers' consultation group and the Show Me That I Matter panel
- Update the 'Pack for Children and Young People in Care', and incorporate comments from children and young people into the complaints leaflet
- Ensure that children and young people in care, and their carers, have a clear package of York benefits (e.g. York Card)
- Ensure that every foster carer has a City of York Council email address and the technology and training to use it
- Remove all unnecessary bureaucracy, e.g. around matters such as expenses
- Ensure that our policies take full account of the changing ethnic make-up of York

Ideas for further consideration

- Consider how best to celebrate the achievements both of long-serving foster carers and of the children and young people themselves

- Some have suggested a regular event; others feel that this unnecessarily differentiates children and young people in care. We will debate these issues further
- Allow foster carers to log into the Children's Services client management system, MOSAIC
- Establish a fund to enable older children to have experiences, such as a foreign holiday.

2. Good, Safe Placements

Priority actions

- Work with local foster carers to develop a new vision for foster care in York encompassing recruitment, roles, responsibilities, remuneration, development and support, recognising that 'caring' will always be the most important element of their role
- Change the way in which we deal with the most complex cases by building increased local capacity
- Review the arrangements for every child placed outside York so that, where it is in their best interests, we can 'Make York Home' for everyone

Continuous improvements

- Ensure that foster carers are fully integrated into the wider team around the child
- Ensure that permanence planning for children and young people in care is promptly actioned, and take all possible steps to improve placement stability
- Ensure that 100% of children and young people receive written information about their new foster carers prior to placement
- Further work to ensure that all of York's children are being placed with providers/settings/schools with good or outstanding judgments from Ofsted
- Introduce better arrangements and management information for succession planning for foster carers, taking into account the age profile of the present workforce and attrition rates
- Embed supervision arrangements and fostering standards for foster carers
- Up-skill foster carers in relation to Early Years development issues

- Ensure we have timely emergency placements, assessments and support for those in care as a result of homelessness
- Ensure we understand, and can articulate, the impact of policies to support children on the edge of care
- Ensure that foster carers feel valued and that their contribution is celebrated

Ideas for further consideration

- Build on the current accredited learning being developed at York St John University to develop a local 'Fostering Degree' for those who want to pursue such a route
- Develop better links between foster carers and the voluntary sector, including 'safe and sound homes' (SASH) hosts
- Develop an agreed framework for evaluating successful placements and a mechanism for learning lessons if they break down.

3. Relationships

Priority actions

- Introduce a new protocol for working with birth families, in consultation with the young people affected

Continuous improvements

- Ensure that support is offered to children and families under special guardianship orders and child arrangement orders, and that all policies and procedures take into account the welcome rise in kinship or connected carers

Ideas for further consideration

- Encourage possible interactions between experienced foster carers and birth families.

4. Identity

Priority actions

- Review all policies and procedures against the new strategic theme of 'normality' to ensure that, so far as possible, the experience of children and young people in care does not differentiate them from their peers

Continuous improvements

- Young people have expressed concern about the use of abbreviations and jargon, such as 'LAC', 'contact' and 'siblings': everyone needs to take care to use jargon-free language
- Provide more independent visitors (aiming for one for every child who wants one)

Ideas for further consideration

- Investigate the potential for creative arts projects to provide an additional medium within which children and young people in care can explore issues of identity.

5. Education

Priority actions

- Tackle the challenges around educational attainment with increased vigour and purpose
- Review and implement as appropriate the recommendations of the Rees Centre report about the 'Educational Progress of Looked After Children'

Continuous improvements

- Despite the significant improvement in the 'Personal Education Plan' (PEP) completion rate, the target is 100%, and further work is needed to improve consistency and quality
- Support the Virtual School in its self-evaluation processes, and implement its improvement plan

Ideas for further consideration

- Provide joint training for social workers and teachers.

6. Health

Priority actions

- Introduce a health passport for all children and young people in care which supports their, and their carers', understanding of their health needs
- Implement the recommendations arising from the 2015 local review of compliance with statutory guidance for the 'Health of Looked After Children'

Continuous improvements

- Ensure initial and review health assessments are promptly undertaken, are of high quality, with an increased emphasis on participation, and improvements are consolidated
- Ensure all children and young people in care can make an informed choice about attendance at health assessments and feel engaged in the process, which should not unnecessarily differentiate them from their peers
- Ensure we commission health assessments for young people not educated in York schools

- Improve the uptake and recording of immunisation records for all children and young people in care
- Improve the numbers of children and young people in care who are registered with a dentist, with a target of 100%
- Work with Clinical Commissioning Group colleagues to ensure children and young people in care are permanently registered with a GP and temporary registrations are used only in exceptional circumstances

Ideas for further consideration

- Consider if the model of the Virtual School offers any lessons for the health community (e.g. a 'Virtual Clinic').

7. Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health

Priority actions

- Construct a profile of the emotional health needs of children and young people in care in order to inform commissioning arrangements across the city
- Ensure that the principle of early intervention is understood and embedded

- Understand better if this group of young people is more likely to engage in risky behaviours, including self-harm, and if so, what can be done to help

Continuous improvements

- Work with the new mental health provider to develop services for children and young people in care, ensuring that the 'offer' is clearly articulated
- Implement the Transformation Plan that has emerged as part of the national 'Future in Mind' initiative
- Improve post-discharge by CAMHS services
- Prioritise children and young people who are on the edge of care who would benefit from targeted input from CAMHS
- Ensure that children and young people are a priority for prompt intervention and support to prevent the need for them to leave their families and communities

Ideas for further consideration

- Set up a 'Children and Young People in Care Reference Group' to support York's CAMHS Executive.

8. Moving To Adulthood

Priority actions

- Work to ensure that 'Staying Put' continues to be the norm in York, and is available for every young person who wants to remain with their foster family

Continuous improvements

- Ensure continued progress in the range of accommodation options for care leavers
- Ensure advice, guidance and support for young people promotes the optimum education, training and employment options
- Up-skill foster carers in relation to the life skills needed for those about to leave care
- Ensure that young people aged 21-25 are enabled and supported to return to learn with financial support, if they are planning to do so
- Ensure that all care leavers are prioritised for work experience, training, apprenticeship and employment in the City of York Council

Ideas for further consideration

- Explore different residential models for those leaving care but not ready to set up on their own
- Explore subsidised Council Tax for care leavers for the first two years
- Use family group conferences more creatively when young people are approaching leaving care to ensure all parties have the appropriate support
- Promise guaranteed interviews for care-experienced young people within the York business community
- Set up some form of mentoring service for young people by older more stable care-experienced young people
- Establish an ‘alumni’ scheme for care-experienced young people.

9. Corporate Parenting

Priority actions

- Refresh the remit and purpose of the Corporate Parenting Board
- Introduce a new performance scorecard for children and young people in care that fully exploits the additional functionality of MOSAIC (See Chapter 6)

Continuous improvements

- Work with the Corporate Parenting Board to ensure that all elected members are aware of their responsibilities and play an active role
- Seek the formal endorsement of the full City of York Council for this strategy
- Increase the number of visits by elected members to the Glen Short Breaks Centre and Wenlock Children’s Home
- Review all governance arrangements for children and young people in care to ensure they are fit for purpose and in accordance with the new strategic themes

‘The intention, both in relation to the overall strategy and decisions about individual cases, is to be risk aware, but not risk-averse.’

- Use the introduction of MOSAIC to prompt a wider reassessment of communications across the partnership, including the recording of information about children and young people in care, and data-sharing arrangements between foster carers, local authority staff, health providers and the Virtual School
- Ensure that all of the actions that flow from this strategy are joined up appropriately with those directed at providing Early Help, and support for troubled families

- Ensure that legitimate attention to systems and accountability is never at the expense of building stable, caring relationships with some of our most vulnerable young people
- Ensure that officers continue to pay due regard to the voice of the child in developing the ideas outlined in this strategy

Ideas for further consideration

- Explore joint access to individual agencies’ IT systems
- Continue to explore more joint working with North and East Yorkshire local authorities.

6. Milestones, Measures and Monitoring

As indicated in the previous chapter, in order to better monitor our progress against the implementation of this strategy, we will introduce a new comprehensive scorecard for children and young people in care. This will be published on the YorOK website.

During 2016 we will establish a core set of indicators to monitor service delivery across all the areas covered by this strategy. We will monitor these regularly through the Strategic Partnership for Children and Young People in Care and the Corporate Parenting Board. The targets will include national indicators, locally-agreed measures and qualitative assessments. We will also undertake an exercise to articulate, against each target, what its particular significance is (in other words, what the data is really telling us), and which agency or individual is responsible both for providing the data and accounting for performance. In order to ensure that such accountability remains focussed, each agency or service provider will be invited to contribute a maximum of three indicators to the core set. We will also monitor the individual projects described in the previous chapter through the establishment of appropriate milestones. We expect substantial progress to have been made on all of the priority projects during the course of 2016.

In the longer term – over the lifetime of this strategy – we will undertake more work to assess and agree what we really mean by a ‘good outcome’ (or a poor one) for a young person who has been looked after. This will not necessarily be straightforward, as there is no national consensus about this, and it could be that, consistent with the personalisation theme within this strategy, the answer may be different for each individual child or young person. We nevertheless believe that an exploration of this issue is timely and will ultimately lead to the development of better services for young people who are looked after in York.

In addition to all of these objective measures we will, of course, continue to place the highest priority on the views of the children and young people themselves, captured both through formal surveys and informal means. We will also consult regularly with foster carers and others who work with children and young people in care.

Annexe A. Progress Since the Last Strategy

This annexe contains some statistical information as well as brief details of key developments in the services for children and young people in care in York since the publication of the last strategy in 2012.

The Population of Children and Young People in Care

In York, the numbers of children and young people in care has been reducing over recent years, stabilising at around 200.

Year End In Care population	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Total	255	259	237	219	198

We believe this is due to improving local practices and the impact of our Early Help Strategy and local arrangements.

In York, our children and young people in care are provided for in a range of local placements with foster carers, adopters, or children’s homes. The proportion of children placed in foster care and adoptive placement compares favourably with national rates. Most children and young people in care are cared for in foster placements, with a small number living at residential schools or in out of city placements. The number of children placed in both local and out of city placements continues to reduce, in contrast to the national picture.

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Local Placements	225	230	212	197	178
Out of City Placements	30	29	25	22	20
Total	255	259	237	219	198

Routine consideration is now given to placing children with connected people and family members. As at March 2015, 24 children were placed with connected people; 25 sibling groups were all placed together (93 children in total) with 37 children, who are part of a sibling group, not living with at least one sibling.

Some children (12) are placed with their parents under care orders with a view to rehabilitation upon the discharge of the order.

Outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers

In terms of educational outcomes for children and young people in care in York, we know the following.

Educational attainment gaps between children in care and their peers are wide across all levels and continue to represent a major challenge for us (as for most other authorities). There has however been a significant improvement at Key Stage 2, where the gap has narrowed more in York than the national average.

Outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 for Children and Young People in Care Compared to Those Not in Care				
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
L4+ including English & mathematics (Children and young people in care) National	42%	45%	48%	n/a
L4+ including English & mathematics (Children and young people not in care) National	75%	76%	79%	n/a
Gap - National	33%	31%	31%	n/a
L4+ including English & mathematics (Children and young people in care) York	56%	40%	33%	73%
L4+ including English & mathematics (Children and young people not in care) York	86%	84%	69%	68%
Gap - York	30%	44%	36%	-5%

Unfortunately the picture is not so good at the end of Key Stage 4: the gap had been narrowing more quickly than the national average but has now opened up again, indicating that the gains in attainment are not yet secure.

Outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4 for Children and Young People in Care Compared to Those Not in Care				
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
			Old methodology	New methodology
5+A*-C including English and mathematics (Children and young people in care) National	15%	16%	14%	12%
5+A*-C including English and mathematics (Children and young people not in care) National	59%	59%	55%	52%
Gap - National	44%	43%	41%	n/a

Outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4 for Children and Young People in Care Compared to Those Not in Care

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2013/14	2014/15
			Old methodology	New methodology	
5+A*-C including English and mathematics (Children and young people in care) York	13%	38%	25%	20%	17%
5+A*-C including English and mathematics (Children and young people not in care) York	63%	67%	n/a	66%	64%
Gap - York	50%	29%	n/a	46%	47%

It needs to be emphasised that cohort sizes are very small, making trend analysis difficult; this problem is compounded by the change in methodology in 2013/14. Issues for KS4 are compounded by placement stability and the length of time in care (a lot of late entrants to care have been out of parental control for some time and the education gap is already an issue). However, there is no question that the gap is still far too wide, and this will be addressed over the lifetime of this strategy.

Unauthorised absence from school for children in care has fallen from 1.5% to 1.1%. Persistent absentees also fell from 7.3% to 5%.

In terms of health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in care in York, we know the following.

The health needs of children and young people are assessed, planned for and met through continuous placement planning and child care reviews. The designated looked after children nurse works with professionals and carers to ensure that services are responsive and timely. Immunisations are nearly all up to date (94%) and whilst most health assessments (76%) and dental checks (70%) are undertaken annually, work is in hand to review local arrangements in the light of feedback from children and young people in care who would prefer a more normal approach to their health needs being met.

Our children and young people in care score highly on the 'Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire' (SDQ), this reflecting the prevalence of complex emotional difficulties.

Young people estranged from their birth family often move into adulthood with a limited knowledge of their family health history. Through consultation with the young people in York we have worked in partnership with North Yorkshire County Council and Scarborough and Ryedale NHS to pilot a looked after child health passport. This is something we are keen to review and implement over the next twelve months.

Outcomes for care leavers at age 19, 20, 21 are positive: two thirds will have their own tenancy, return to their own family, take up the offer of a taster flat or be living with friends; most stay put with their former foster carers (17 in March 2015). 10% are homeless and helped to get their own tenancy. Strong relationships exist with housing, probation, mental health services and children's services if a young person becomes a parent.

Young people leaving care or who have left care receive help and support tailored to their individual needs and are provided with opportunities to enable them to move successfully to adulthood. There is a range of support options in place to enable access to appropriate education and employment opportunities, including

work experience and apprenticeships. More young people in the age range 18-21 want a second chance in Further Education/Higher Education or want to try out independent accommodation. Four young people post 21 have asked to be supported in going to university and the local authority has provided support with transport and accommodation costs. Relatively low numbers of care leavers are NEET, though this will always remain a priority for us.

The number of young people 'staying put' has increased - 55% and rising: this has been a major achievement over the lifetime of the last strategy.

Other Developments

There have been many other developments over the past three years in the support for children and young people in care, including:

- The appointment of a Virtual School head teacher and the proactive work of the senior leadership team. The Virtual School has an overview of each child and young person in care and the monitoring of their progress through key stages. The Virtual School includes a part-time educational psychologist and a Connexions adviser.

The Virtual School now provides challenge around narrowing the gap, as well as engaging in greater operational work supporting children, young people, teachers and social workers. The school produces a regular self-evaluation and has an improvement plan

- The New Deal for Foster Carers, ensuring a vision for the future work of York's valued foster carers. 75% of York's children and young people in care are placed with skilled York foster carers, offering placement stability and valuable links with their home communities
- The CAMHS Looked After Children's Service works with children and young people in care, foster carers and care leavers to achieve greater placement stability
- Improved work in the 'edge of care services' through the Keeping Families Together commitment
- Increased opportunities for leisure and cultural activities for children and young people in care, such as the All Together Active youth club and access to the council's sports and leisure facilities

- The provision of a dedicated Looked After Children centre at Hamilton House has focused the contact provision for children and young people in care and their families
- Listening to children and young people in care has been a strong feature of our work. Examples include: Show Me That I Matter panel (age 14+), I Matter Too panel (age 10-14), U Matter Survey, Speak Up Event, young people interview panels and an expanded advocacy offer
- The Looked After Children's Handbook
- The expansion of Independent Visitors
- Improvements in the Independent Reviewing Service
- The renewed Guarantee for Children and Young People in Care (reproduced at Annexe C).

'The number of young people 'staying put' has increased - 55% and rising...'

Annexe B. The Views of Children and Young People in Care

The 2015 U Matter Survey was rolled out between February and April 2015 to collect the current views of children and young people in care in York. The U Matter Survey is just one approach within many taken to gather children and young people's views. The highlights from this survey are as follows:

Placements

Most young people (87%) either agreed or strongly agreed that City of York provides good quality placements. 7% of young people disagreed (4/52 young people) and 6% strongly disagreed (3/52 young people). One young person who strongly disagreed said 'I miss my family a lot so I strongly disagree that the council provide good quality placements'. This is in line with what young people were telling us last year in the 2014 U Matter Survey.

Social Worker

85% of young people knew how to contact their social worker when they needed them. Just over half of young people who participated in the survey (54%) did not know who to contact when their social worker was off sick or on holiday; however this shows an improvement from the previous year as 71% of young people did not know who to contact in 2014.

65% of young people said their social worker was reliable; this has dropped from the previous year when 81% of young people said their social worker was reliable.

Reviews

Most young people were positive about the review process. 78% of young people knew who their Independent Reviewing Officer was; previously less than half knew who this was. 88% of young people knew they could have a say in where their meetings take place, and 65% of young people stated they normally attend their reviews.

Contact with Family and Friends

82% of young people said they feel they have enough help and support to keep in touch with friends and family. 84% felt they were given enough information about when, where and how often they would see family or friends.

18% of young people were unhappy about contact arrangements, (9 out of 51 young people). If ever unhappy about contact arrangements, 90% of young people knew who to contact to talk about this. These results are in line with the 2014 statistics.

Education

Respondents were positive about their education and the support they receive at school. 89% of young people felt they receive the right amount of support in their education and training, 94% of young people knew who their designated teacher was at school and 76% of young people knew about their Personal Education Plan (PEP). This is a big increase from the previous year with 54% of young people knowing what this was.

90% of young people felt their carers take care of their health very well or well; this has dipped compared to the previous year with 98%. 10% of young people (5 young people) felt their carers did not take care of their health well or felt this was done poorly. 77% of young people said they were encouraged to take part in sport and after school activities however, this has dropped 13% from the previous year.

How Safe do You Feel?

Young people were asked about how safe they felt at home, at school and how safe they felt in the area they live in. This was asked on a scale of 1-4, 1 being not safe and 4 feeling really safe. Most young people felt either safe or really safe at home, while 9% did not feel safe. It is worth noting when young people identified not feeling safe at home this was dealt with and the appropriate people were contacted. 92% of young people felt safe at school. 85% of young people felt safe in the area they lived in.

Leaving Care

This question received the least responses as most of the young people who participated in the survey were still in care. 89% of young people (8 young people) said they had received enough support when getting ready to leave care and 86% (6 out of 7 young people) said they had received enough support since they left care.

Rights and Entitlements

In 2014, around half of the respondents said they were aware of the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service; this year this has risen, with 85% of young people aware of the service.

In 2014, 74% of young people said they were treated with respect by people working with them; this has now improved with 85% of young people in 2015 feeling they are treated with respect. 81% of young people felt they knew enough about their rights and entitlements; those who did not were directed to the Show Me That I Matter website for more information.

81% of young people felt they have a say about decisions made about them compared to 70% in 2014. In 2014, 87% of young people knew they could make a complaint if they wanted about a service they had received. This has increased slightly as 89% of young people knew they could make a complaint in 2015.

Overall Care Experience

When respondents were asked to rate their overall experience of being in care the results saw a drop from the previous year with 63% of young people rating their experience being very good or good, compared to 76% of young people the previous year. Those who felt their experience was poor or very poor reflected 4% of young people in 2014. However we have seen an increase with 18% of young people not feeling happy with their care experience saying it was quite poor or very poor in 2015. The percentage of young people who feel their care experience was okay has remained very similar.

Annexe C. York's Guarantee to Children and Young People in Care

York's Guarantee to children and young people in care

"We will make sure children and young people in our care are at the centre of everything we do."

Good placements

We will provide good quality placements with kind carers who will do their very best to get to know you, make you feel comfortable, involve you and listen to your views. When choosing the right placement for you we will involve you whenever we can.

Treated with respect

We will make sure you are always treated with respect, know about your rights and the things you are entitled to and given this information when you first come into care.

Help you keep in touch

We know that keeping in touch with your friends and family is important and so we will support you with this wherever possible. If for any reason this can't happen we will make sure you know why.

Have fun together

We will make sure that you have the opportunities to meet with other children and young people in care at groups and activity clubs, for those of you who would like to.

Help you in school

We will support you in school and help you catch up if you fall behind. We will also make sure you know about support available if you move on to college or university.

Reliable social worker

We will make sure you have a social worker who is reliable, you will be given all the information you need to contact them or a member of their team so that you get a quick response when you need it. If we have to change your social worker we will make sure you know what is happening and try to do this with a proper handover.

An Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) you know

We will make sure you know who your Independent Reviewing Officer is and are able to talk to them about how, when and where you want your reviews to take place. You will meet your IRO before you have your review and be able to get in touch with them whenever you need to.

Support you until you're an adult

As you get older we will help you with training, housing, managing your money, and will make sure that you have someone to talk to about the things that are important to you.



J. Brooks

Clr Jenny Brooks
Executive Member for Education, Children and Young People



J. Stonehouse

Jon Stonehouse
Director of Children's Services, Education and Skills



If the council isn't keeping these promises for you, please contact Speak Up, York Children's Rights and Advocacy Service on 07769725174 or showmethatimatter@york.gov.uk



Annexe D. Membership of the Strategic Partnership for Children and Young People in Care (January 2016)

Assistant Director, Children's Specialist Services, City of York Council – Chair

Chair, YAFCA

Children's Rights Manager, City of York Council

Consultant Headteacher for the Virtual School

Designated Doctor for Safeguarding Children including Looked After Children, Vale of York CCG

Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children including Looked After Children, Vale of York CCG

Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children, North Yorkshire and City of York, Scarborough & Ryedale CCG

Director of Operations, Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust

Director of Public Health

Executive Member, Education, Children & Young People

Executive Nurse for Safeguarding Children, Vale of York CCG

Group Manager, Achieving Permanence, City of York Council

Head of Social Work Services, City of York Council

Limetrees CAMHS

Named Nurse for Safeguarding Children, York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

North Yorkshire Police

Principal Social Worker, City of York Council

Senior Commissioner, Partnership Commissioning Unit, VACCU

Strategic Support Manager, Services for Children, Young People and Education, City of York Council

Virtual School Headteacher

Youth Offending Team Manager, City of York Council

Annexe E. Strategic Partnership for Children and Young People in Care - Illustrative Scorecard

This scorecard is designed to illustrate how key performance measures will demonstrate our progress towards the strategy priorities.

Priority	Example Performance Measure(s)
Respect and Involvement Good, Safe Placements	% of children in care whose reviews take place within required timescales
	% of children in care who have less than 3 placement moves in a year
	% of children in care who are in a stable placement
Relationships Education	% of children returned home
	% of children in care who have an up to date Personal Education Plan % of children in care who do as well as their peers in school exams
Health	% of children in care who have an up to date health assessment % of children in care who have a regular check up with a dentist
	Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health
Moving to Adulthood	% of care leavers who stay with their carer after they turn 18, if they want to % of care leavers in education, employment or training

For any queries about this strategy or in relation to children and young people in care, please contact:

Children's Specialist Services:

- Eoin Rush, Assistant Director: eoin.rush@york.gov.uk
- Dot Evans, Head of Social Work Services: dot.evans@york.gov.uk
- Judy Kent, Group Manager, Achieving Permanence: judy.kent@york.gov.uk



If you would like this information in larger print or in an accessible format (for example, in Braille, on CD or by email), please telephone 01904 554212.

This information can be provided in your own language.

Informacje te mogą być przekazywane w języku ojczystym.

Polish

Bu bilgi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür.

Turkish

此信息可以在您自己的语言。

Chinese (Simplified)

此資訊可以提供您自己的語言。

Chinese (Traditional)

 01904 551550