



**Notice of meeting of  
Corporate Parenting Board**

**To:** Councillors Funnell, Looker, Potter, Scott, Wiseman,  
Brooks, Cuthbertson and Runciman

**Date:** Tuesday, 10 July 2012

**Time:** 5.30 pm

**Venue:** The Guildhall, York

**AGENDA**

- 1. Election of Chair**  
To formally elect a Chair of the Group
- 2. Election of Vice-Chair**  
To formally elect a Vice-Chair of the Group.
- 3. Declarations of Interests**  
At this point in the meeting, Members will be invited to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they may have in the business on the agenda.
- 4. Public Participation**  
At this point in the meeting members of the public who have registered their wish to speak regarding an item on the agenda or an issue within the Board's remit can do so. The deadline for registering is 5pm the working day before the meeting, in this case **5pm on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2012.**

To register, or for further information, please contact the Democracy Officer for the meeting using the details at the foot of this agenda.

**5. Scene Setting for the Work of the Corporate Parenting Board** (Pages 3 - 106)

The Corporate Parenting Board has been established to provide a forum for elected members to oversee the progress of all looked after children , through the implementation of the Looked After Children's Strategy 2012-15. This report provides background information which will inform the future work of the Board.

**6. Terms of Reference** (Pages 107 - 110)

This is the first meeting of the Board following its establishment in the new council constitution. Members of the Board will be asked to consider a draft set of terms of reference.

**7. 2012/13 Work Plan and Future Meeting Dates**

Members are asked to agree a work plan of the Corporate Parenting Board for the 2012/13 municipal year and to set future meeting dates.

**8. Urgent Business**

Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

Democracy Officers:

Names: Catherine Clarke and Louise Cook (job share)

Contact Details:

- Telephone – (01904) 551031
- E-mail – [catherine.clarke@york.gov.uk](mailto:catherine.clarke@york.gov.uk) and [louise.cook@york.gov.uk](mailto:louise.cook@york.gov.uk)

For more information about any of the following please contact the Democracy Officer responsible for servicing this meeting Catherine Clarke and Louise Cook Democracy Officers

- Registering to speak
- Written Representations
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports

## About City of York Council Meetings

### Would you like to speak at this meeting?

If you would, you will need to:

- register by contacting the Democracy Officer (whose name and contact details can be found on the agenda for the meeting) **no later than 5.00 pm** on the last working day before the meeting;
- ensure that what you want to say speak relates to an item of business on the agenda or an issue which the committee has power to consider (speak to the Democracy Officer for advice on this);
- find out about the rules for public speaking from the Democracy Officer.

**A leaflet on public participation is available on the Council's website or from Democratic Services by telephoning York (01904) 551088**

### Further information about what's being discussed at this meeting

All the reports which Members will be considering are available for viewing online on the Council's website. Alternatively, copies of individual reports or the full agenda are available from Democratic Services. Contact the Democracy Officer whose name and contact details are given on the agenda for the meeting. **Please note a small charge may be made for full copies of the agenda requested to cover administration costs.**

### Access Arrangements

We will make every effort to make the meeting accessible to you. The meeting will usually be held in a wheelchair accessible venue with an induction hearing loop. We can provide the agenda or reports in large print, electronically (computer disk or by email), in Braille or on audio tape. Some formats will take longer than others so please give as much notice as possible (at least 48 hours for Braille or audio tape).

If you have any further access requirements such as parking close-by or a sign language interpreter then please let us know. Contact the Democracy Officer whose name and contact details are given on the order of business for the meeting.

Every effort will also be made to make information available in another language, either by providing translated information or an

interpreter providing sufficient advance notice is given. Telephone York (01904) 551550 for this service.

যদি যথেষ্ট আগে থেকে জানানো হয় তাহলে অন্য কোন ভাষাতে তথ্য জানানোর জন্য সব ধরনের চেষ্টা করা হবে, এর জন্য দরকার হলে তথ্য অনুবাদ করে দেয়া হবে অথবা একজন দোভাষী সরবরাহ করা হবে। টেলিফোন নম্বর (01904) 551 550।

*Yeteri kadar önceden haber verilmesi koşuluyla, bilgilerin terümesini hazırlatmak ya da bir tercüman bulmak için mümkün olan herşey yapılacaktır. Tel: (01904) 551 550*

我們竭力使提供的資訊備有不同語言版本，在有充足時間提前通知的情況下會安排筆譯或口譯服務。電話 (01904) 551 550。

اگر مناسب وقت سے اطلاع دی جاتی ہے تو ہم معلومات کا ترجمہ میا کرنے کی پوری کوشش کریں گے۔ ٹیلی فون (01904) 551 550

*Informacja może być dostępna w tłumaczeniu, jeśli dostaniemy zapotrzebowanie z wystarczającym wyprzedzeniem. Tel: (01904) 551 550*

### **Holding the Cabinet to Account**

The majority of councillors are not appointed to the Cabinet (39 out of 47). Any 3 non-Cabinet councillors can 'call-in' an item of business following a Cabinet meeting or publication of a Cabinet Member decision. A specially convened Corporate and Scrutiny Management Committee (CSMC) will then make its recommendations to the next scheduled Cabinet meeting, where a final decision on the 'called-in' business will be made.

### **Scrutiny Committees**

The purpose of all scrutiny and ad-hoc scrutiny committees appointed by the Council is to:

- Monitor the performance and effectiveness of services;
- Review existing policies and assist in the development of new ones, as necessary; and
- Monitor best value continuous service improvement plans

### **Who Gets Agenda and Reports for our Meetings?**

- Councillors get copies of all agenda and reports for the committees to which they are appointed by the Council;
- Relevant Council Officers get copies of relevant agenda and reports for the committees which they report to;
- Public libraries get copies of **all** public agenda/reports.





---

**Corporate Parenting Board****10 July 2012**

Report of the Director of Adults, Children and Education

**Scene Setting for the Work of the Corporate Parenting Board****Summary**

1. The council is committed to ensuring that every looked after child has the best possible start in life, is given help to achieve their potential and experiences safe and positive parenting.
2. The Corporate Parenting Board has been established to provide a forum for elected members to oversee the progress of all looked after children , through the implementation of the Looked After Children's Strategy 2012-15
3. It is noted that this is the first meeting of the newly established Board. This report provides background information which will inform the future work of the Board.

**Background**

4. The Looked After Children's Strategy 2012-15 was published in March 2012, with endorsement by the Cabinet Member for Children, The Chief Executive and the Director of Adults, Children and Education. It followed extensive consultation with children and young people in care, their families, their foster carers and all partner agencies, who work to support these children.
5. This document is a key source for the work of the board. There are action plans relating to all of the strands of the strategy, which will be reviewed at the Strategic Partnership for Looked After Children regularly. The plans relate to Respect and Involvement; Good, Safe Placements: Relationships; Identity; Education; Health; Emotional Wellbeing; Moving into Adulthood and Corporate Parenting.

6. Consideration of the strategy will inform the proposed reporting schedule to the board in relation to all of these important areas for looked after children and partner services. The strategy is attached at Annex A.
7. The document prepared by the Local Government Improvement and Development agency provides valuable guidance for elected members upon the areas of corporate parenting responsibilities. Consideration of the key questions included may shape the reporting requirements from partners working with looked after children, young people and care leavers. The guidance is attached at Annex B.
8. Ofsted undertook an in depth inspection of the services provided by City of York in relation to safeguarding of children and looked after children in March 2012. It was published in May 2012 and provides a valuable basis for the new board to understand the context of local services and the findings of an inspection by Ofsted. The report is attached as Annex C.

### **Consultation**

9. The Looked After Children's strategy was published following consultation with the Show Me That I Matter Panel (the children in care council) and I Matter Too (a younger children's consultation group). There was further consultation with foster carers and all partner agencies, who contribute to the care and support of looked after children.

### **Options**

10. There are no options for decision, as the information provided is intended to establish a work plan and reporting schedule for the quarterly meetings of the Board.

### **Analysis**

11. Not applicable

### **Council Plan**

12. The Corporate Parenting Board will be ensuring that the work of partners for looked after children contributes to the aims of:

- The Children and Young People's Plan
  - Building strong communities
  - Protecting vulnerable people
13. Through the positive outcomes for looked after children, the aim is for them to be able to benefit from and contribute to
- Get York moving
  - Create jobs and grow the economy
  - Protect the environment

### **Implications**

14. There are no implications relating to Financial, Human Resources, Equalities, Legal, Crime and Disorder, Information Technology or Property arising from this report.

### **Risk Management**

15. Not applicable

### **Recommendations**

16. Members are asked to consider the information contained in the Looked After Children's Strategy, the LGID guidance and The Ofsted report.
17. It is recommended that the Board requests a schedule of quarterly reports from the Director of Adults, Children and Education relating to the progress of the department and its key partners in progressing the actions to achieve York's vision for looked after children.

Reason: To enable the Corporate Parenting Board to establish the key areas around which future Board work will be focussed, which will assist in holding the council officers and its partners to account in improving the life experiences and chances of York's looked after children.

**Contact Details**

**Author:**

Howard Lovelady, Head of  
Service (Resources)  
Children's Social Care,  
ACE  
Tel: 555357

**Chief Officer Responsible for the  
report:**

Eoin Rush  
Assistant Director (Children and Families)  
Tel: 554212

Report Approved  Date 3 July 2012

**Specialist Implications Officer(s)**

Not applicable

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

**Background Papers:**

Annex A - Looked After Children's Strategy 2012-15

Annex B - Scrutinising Services for Looked After Children

Annex C - Ofsted Inspection Report: Safeguarding and Looked After  
Children: March 2012



# Looked After Children Strategy 2012 - 2015

Improving the outcomes for our Looked After Children  
and Care Leavers

# Contents

<b>1.</b>	Introduction	Page 3
<b>2.</b>	York’s vision for Looked After Children	Page 4
<b>3.</b>	York’s pledge to children and young people in care	Page 5
<b>4.</b>	Who are we?	Page 6
<b>5.</b>	Outcomes for Looked After Children Strategy	Page 7
<b>6.</b>	Our strategy for Looked after Children	Page 9
<b>7.</b>	Delivering, monitoring and reviewing our action plan	Page 24
<b>8.</b>	Annex 1 – Planning arrangements	Page 25
	Annex 2 – Aims and expectations of the ‘Show Me That I Matter’ panel	Page 26
	Annex 3 – The role of ‘I Matter 2’	Page 27
	Annex 4 – The pledge for Looked After Children (long version)	Page 28
	Annex 5 – References	Page 33

# Introduction

We are delighted to introduce this strategy, **“Improving the outcomes for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers.”**

**Here in York there is no greater priority.**

As a council we are committed to ensuring that every Looked After Child has the best possible start in life, is given help to achieve their potential and experiences safe and positive parenting. Our Looked After Children come to us for all sorts of reasons and at every age, infant to teenagers. This strategy and its pledge is for every single one of them, whatever their circumstances.

The priorities in this document are drawn from what our Looked After Children and Young People have told us is important to them. It features the **York Pledge** – a promise given by the council and its partners about the quality and nature of care that any child or young person can expect if they become looked after. Our strategy is also informed by the outcome of national surveys and features the voices of children in care, as represented through the “100 days of care” report.

Our Looked After Children and Care Leavers rely on all agencies to work together to meet their needs. Such a joined up approach is only possible when everyone understands and accepts their responsibilities for this group of children and young people.

This strategy describes the contributions of all partner agencies that are required to further improve outcomes for this group of children and young people.

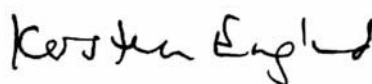
The annual **Action Plan** that accompanies this document sets out clearly how we will deliver our priorities, who will lead this work and where it will be monitored and reviewed.

The strength of this document and the strategy it describes lies in the continued and active engagement of all our Looked After Children and Young People. We are determined to ensure that this engagement remains a central feature of everything we do.

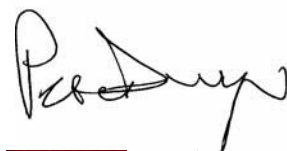
We believe that this strategy will support our joint working on the most important issues, to achieve the best possible outcomes for all our Looked After Children and Care Leavers here in York.




**Cllr Janet Looker**  
Cabinet Member  
for Education,  
Children and  
Young People




**Kersten England**  
Chief Executive




**Pete Dwyer**  
Director, Adults,  
Children and  
Education



# York's Vision for Looked After Children

The vision of the York strategy for Looked After Children is simple - we want our children and young people to have everything that good parents want for their children.

We want our Looked After Children and Young People to work with us, along with their parents and carers, in shaping how we manage and organise the planning, resources and services that support and care for them.

We want our children and young people to be happy and healthy, both physically and emotionally, to be safe and protected from harm and exploitation, and to be supported each step of the way to adult life.

We want them to achieve their potential, especially at school, to make the most of the learning opportunities they are offered and to participate in the decisions affecting their care and their lives. This includes making the transition to adulthood with continuity of support, access to good jobs and higher education, while living in good housing and being financially secure.

Our strategy invites us to work together with common purpose, putting the care of our Looked After Children at the heart of everything we do.





# York's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

**City of York Council's commitment to children and young people in care, written by young people and endorsed by the Strategic Partnership for Looked After Children.**

1. Good quality placements will be found for all children and young people that need them.
2. We will help you to keep in contact with family and friends wherever possible.
3. You will have your own social worker who is reliable, trustworthy and who will listen and treat you with respect.
4. We will support and encourage you with your learning, education and training.
5. We will respect difference and support you as an individual.
6. We will arrange your child care reviews in a way that best suits you and covers the things that are important to you.
7. You will be made aware of your rights, choices and the things that you are entitled to, including your right to complain if you are unhappy.
8. We will support you to lead a healthy and happy life.
9. We will support any interests you may have and encourage you to take part in any activities that would be good for you.
10. To help with your move into adulthood we will support 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.

You will be routinely asked by your Independent Reviewing Officer whether you feel the Council is keeping this promise to you. If not you can contact the Rights and Advocacy Service on 07769725174 and we will try and find out why this has happened and most importantly try to make sure things change for you.

*Janet A. Looker*



**Cllr Janet Looker**  
Cabinet Member  
for Education,  
Children and  
Young People

*Kersten England*



**Kersten England**  
Chief Executive

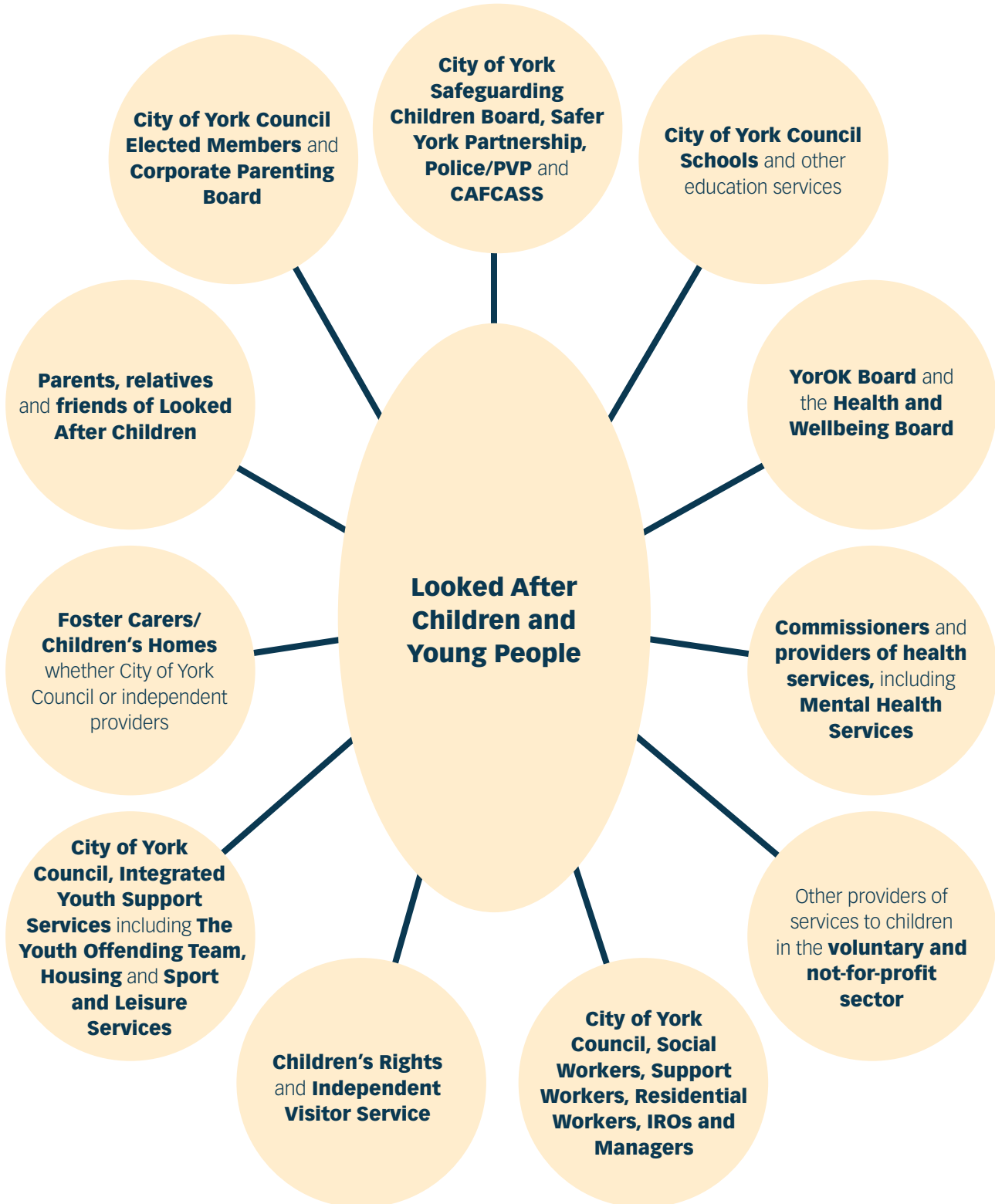
*Pete Dwyer*



**Pete Dwyer**  
Director, Adults,  
Children and  
Education

**“The vision of the York Strategy for Looked After Children is simple: we want our children and young people to have everything that good parents want for their children.”**

**Who Are We?**



A partnership with representatives from all of the above groups makes up our Strategic Partnership for Looked After Children. This group will be responsible for ensuring the effective delivery of our strategy.

# Outcomes for Looked After Children Strategy

**Informed by what our Looked After Children and Care Leavers have told us is important to them, we have identified nine key outcomes which are at the heart of this strategy.**

**These outcomes are:**

## **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.

"We want adults to really listen to us and act on what we say."

"We want adults to be respectful."

## **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.

"I think my move went well because I was well prepared and met the carers beforehand."

## **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.

We don't want placements too far away from home or school."

## **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.

"My social worker helped me understand why I was in care."

### 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.

"My social worker explained my circumstances in advance so I wasn't made to feel I stood out."

### 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.

"Looked After Children need someone trusted to talk to in confidence about health issues."

### 7. Emotional Wellbeing

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.

"When you start your placement, the social worker should stay a while to help you settle."

### 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.

"As you leave care, it is really important to have someone to ring for support."

### 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 Looked After Children and Young People as good parents would in any family.

"We want to know that we are important."

# Strategy for Looked after Children

## 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.

### York's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care says:

- ▶ You will have your own social worker who is reliable, trustworthy and who will listen and treat you with respect.
- ▶ You will be made aware of your rights, choices and the things you are entitled to, including your right to complain if you are unhappy.
- ▶ We will arrange your child care reviews in a way that best suits you and covers the things that are important to you.

### What we know about children and young people's experience:

#### Nationally (Ofsted Children's Care Monitor 2010)

- ▶ 53% of children and young people said their opinion was usually/always sought on things that mattered to them.
- ▶ 15% said that their opinion is not usually/never sought.
- ▶ 51% thought their opinions make a difference to the decisions about their lives.

#### Nationally (Children on Independent Reviewing Officers 2011)

- ▶ 71% who had an IRO said they knew how to contact their IRO, and 29% said they didn't know how to contact them.

#### Locally (CYC Pledge Consultation 2011)

- ▶ Children and young people want social workers who care, are reliable and will listen and treat them with respect.
- ▶ They want more information about what is going to happen to them and where they are going to live.
- ▶ They think their reviews can be long, boring and repetitive, and their views don't make much difference.
- ▶ They liked the experience of being consulted as a group, and want to do more of it.



**Locally (CYC Quality Assurance data)**

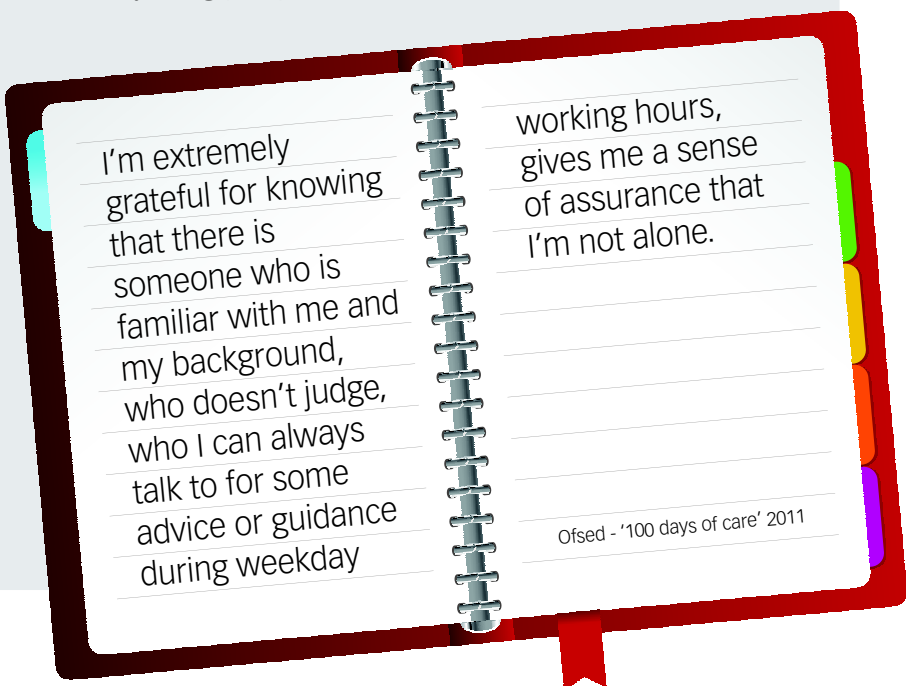
- ▶ Too few children and young people are directly consulted by the reviewing officer before their review.
- ▶ 98% of over 5s communicate their views to reviews, mostly by indirect means.

**What we have done so far:**

- ▶ We have two active groups, Show Me That I Matter (SMTIM) aged 11 and over, and I Matter Too (IM2) aged 8-11, of children and young people in which they can talk about their experiences and wishes to responsible people, including councillors, and influence decision-making.
- ▶ Children and young people have taken part in a research consultation exercise with York University to inform the City of York Council’s Pledge, and participated in the making of a DVD to promote this.
- ▶ Reviewing officers are improving participation in reviews by encouraging children and young people to chair and/or evaluate their reviews.
- ▶ All newly Looked After Children receive an introductory visit from their IRO to explain the role.
- ▶ The Children’s Rights and Advocacy Service provides volunteer advocates when requested, and provides advice and support, including at reviews.
- ▶ It has also set up a Facebook page and is developing a children and young people’s website.

**What we are going to do next:**

- ▶ Extend our current consultation and involvement of children and young people to a wider, more representative group, so that it fulfils the function of a Children in Care Council.
- ▶ Ensure all Looked After Children receive a ‘Rate My Review’ postcard from their IRO to get feedback about their experience of the care planning process.
- ▶ Increase the number of children and young people actively participating in their reviews, year on year, and ensure that children and young people feel that their involvement in their reviews has made a difference.
- ▶ Find ways of ensuring that care planning decisions, such as change of placement, are not made outside the review process, and that children and young people are involved in these decisions.
- ▶ Provide children and young people who are old enough to have them with a copy of their placement plan.



## 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.

### York's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care says:

- ▶ Good quality placements will be found for all children and young people that need them.

### What we know about children and young people's experience:

#### Nationally (Ofsted Children's Care Monitor 2010)

- ▶ 94% of children felt safe where they live.
- ▶ 90% of children rated their care as good/very good, and foster care is rated most highly.
- ▶ 83% thought they were in the right placement for them.

#### Locally (CYC Pledge Consultation 2011)

- ▶ Children and young people said they should have information about their placement and a chance to visit before they go.
- ▶ They want good foster families, where they are treated as one of the family and included in everything the family does.

### What we have done so far:

- ▶ Increased the number of foster homes to an all-time high. There are currently 25% more than there were two years ago.
- ▶ Independent arrangements are in place for dealing with allegations against our staff, including foster carers, using the Local Authority Designated Officer.
- ▶ Increased the number of children and young people who can be cared for locally in foster placements.
- ▶ Created a successful Staying Put scheme, which makes it possible for young people to remain with their foster family beyond the age of 18.
- ▶ Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has a looked after children team, which supports foster carers and residential staff with advice on behaviour management, contributes to the training of new and established foster carers, and provides advice to social workers on the needs of children and young people.

### What we are going to do next:

- ▶ Produce an easy-to-share information sheet about each foster family and Wenlock Terrace to give to children and young people before they are placed, and offer an introductory visit wherever possible.



- ▶ Ask children to tell us about their experiences of their foster/residential placement after they have left it, so that we can use this information to improve the service.
- ▶ Develop a robust system for setting up reviews at short notice in situations where a child or young person faces an unexpected placement move, or decides to leave care in an unplanned way.

### 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.

#### York's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care says:

- ▶ We will help you to keep in contact with family and friends wherever possible.

#### What we know about children and young people's experience:

##### Nationally (Ofsted Children's Care Monitor 2010)

- ▶ 74% of children and young people are separated from their siblings when they become looked after; 49% of these think it was wrong to separate them; 37% think it was the right thing to do.
- ▶ 55% think siblings should always be placed together.
- ▶ 89% of those placed with siblings think this is the right thing for them.

##### Locally (CYC Pledge Consultation 2011)

- ▶ Children and young people said they worry about their family, especially what has happened to their siblings when they come into care, and aren't given enough information.
- ▶ They wanted help and support to maintain their relationships with family and friends while in care, especially when they change placement.
- ▶ They wanted contact arrangements to be made promptly, and to be explained to them properly.



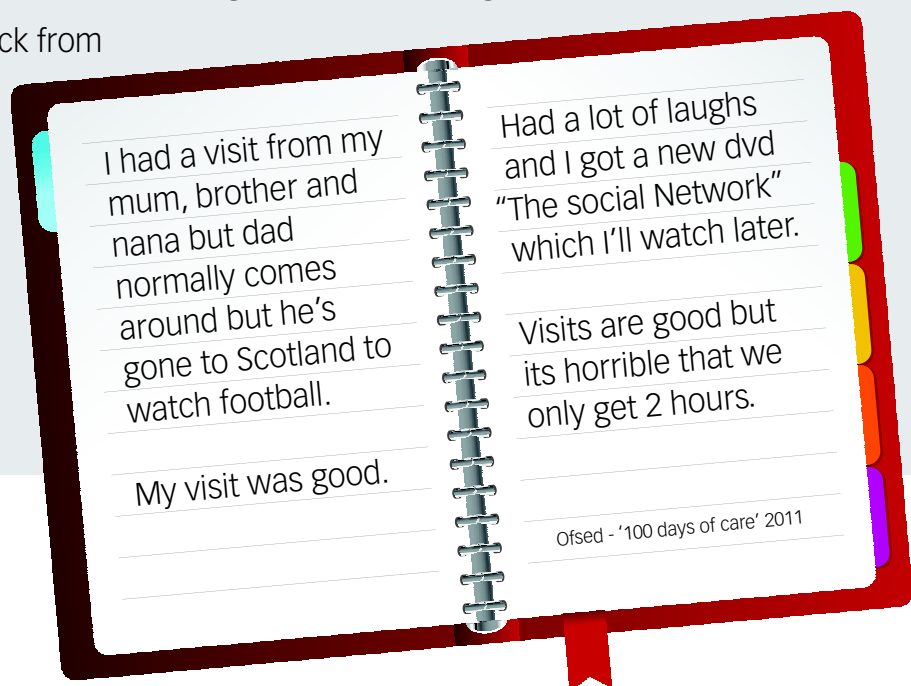
- ▶ They were clear what they want from their relationship with their social worker, but said they don't always get this as their experience is very variable.
- ▶ They wanted foster carers who are honest with them and act like "real parents", including taking them out more.

### What we have done so far:

- ▶ Provided opportunities for children and young people to get together e.g. the Show Me That I Matter Group, but we need to do more of this.
- ▶ The CAMHS Looked After Children service has established a fortnightly drop in club for Looked After Children to support the development of friendship and peer support.
- ▶ The Altogether Active scheme provides challenging physical activities for young people in the Summer holidays.
- ▶ The Children's Rights service is carrying out a consultation with the I Matter 2 Group (younger children) about what makes a good social worker.

### What we are going to do next:

- ▶ Actively respond to the concerns of children and young people about their contact with their siblings, family and friends.
- ▶ Develop and promote more widely the existing groups and resources available for Looked After Children and Young People, including the Facebook page and the website.
- ▶ Obtain views and feedback from children and young people about their experiences of social workers and foster carers, and ensure that these are communicated to social workers and foster carers to improve their practice.



#### 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.

#### York's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care says:

- ▶ We will respect difference and support you as an individual.

#### What we know about children and young people's experience:

The views of children and young people about their sense of identity and their understanding of their heritage when in care have been little researched, either nationally or locally.

#### Locally (CYC Pledge Consultation 2011)

- ▶ Children and young people said they do not want to be treated differently or made to stand out, especially at school.
- ▶ They also said they want to be treated as equals and as individuals, not as a group of "Looked After Children".

#### What we have done so far:

- ▶ We have skilled staff who create Life Story Books for children and young people who are to be adopted, but do not at present do this for other children and young people.

#### What we are going to do next:

- ▶ Provide all children and young people with information, photographs and a treasure box to support their understanding of their birth family and to record their life experiences while in care.
- ▶ Make sure that children and young people are not made to feel different because of their looked after status, e.g. in the provision of transport, or access to leisure and cultural opportunities.
- ▶ Ensure that the carers of Looked After Children and Young People with disabilities, or other additional needs, receive appropriate information and training so that they can meet the children/young people's identity and emotional needs effectively.
- ▶ Commission local research to enable us to understand and address the identity issues which may affect all Looked After Children and Young People.

Today me and my team mates are playing wheelchair football in Birmingham for the regional league. Mom not feeling very well so dad taking me. We have got 3 games. I love playing powerchair football, I feel free and normal.

Ofsted - '100 days of care' 2011

## 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.

### York's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care says:

- ▶ We will support and encourage you with your learning, education and training.
- ▶ We will support any interests you may have and encourage you to take part in any activities that would be good for you.

### What we know about children and young people's experience:

#### Nationally (Ofsted Children's Care Monitor 2010)

- ▶ 87% of children and young people rated the education they received as good/very good.
- ▶ 78% said they are doing well at school.
- ▶ 54% thought the last change of school when they changed placement was in their best interests.

#### Locally (CYC Pledge Consultation 2011)

- ▶ Children and young people said they want teachers to know enough about them to understand their situation, but not to be singled out and made to feel different in front of their peers.
- ▶ They want a good education, and to be supported in this by their carers and schools.

#### Research by York trainee educational psychologist into how Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are perceived by children aged 8-14 (July 2011)

- ▶ In general, children thought the PEPs were worthwhile and purposeful, and resulted in additional support when needed.
- ▶ They did not always like the PEP meetings, feeling they had little control over the process and lacked clarity of explanation. They wanted more privacy and the presence of supportive adults.

### What we have done so far:

- ▶ All children and young people have Personal Education Plans, though these are not always initiated or reviewed in a timely manner.
- ▶ We have established a virtual school for Looked After Children, with a 'live' virtual school roll which enables the virtual head to track young people and keep in contact with carers and social workers on any single day.
- ▶ Attainment is tracked across key stages, and intervention by the virtual head is proportionate to individual need, and supports schools to make effective provision according to changing needs.

- ▶ All schools have trained designated teachers for Looked After Children who can also access the virtual school information about their children. Schools' performance in relation to their Looked After Children is monitored and evaluated, both internally and externally.
- ▶ Children and young people have priority access to extended school activities and holiday clubs, and there is effective liaison between schools and other providers of services, such as independent visitors.
- ▶ Alternative and highly personalised provision is matched to individual pupil needs within the Danesgate Community, ensuring that those young people not in mainstream provision have access to relevant courses that lead to accreditation. Outcomes show a rising trend of 5 A\*-C equivalents.
- ▶ The attendance of our Looked After Children and Young People is better and improving at a faster rate than peers in primary schools, despite an increasing number of Looked After Children. Attendance in secondary schools is in line with peer group.
- ▶ Collaborative interagency partnerships have succeeded in reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions of children and young people who are looked after, and there have been no permanent exclusions since 2008.

### What we are going to do next:

- ▶ Raise the attainment of Looked After Children and Young People, and support this by ensuring that all PEPs are completed in a timely manner and by auditing the quality of PEPs.
- ▶ Build on the research into children and young people's experience of the PEP process by working with reviewing officers, schools and carers in a multi-agency group to improve the process and make it more meaningful for children and young people and their carers.
- ▶ Introduce a post-16 PEP, which will ensure that the education and training needs of young people are fully met.
- ▶ Embed the Moving School Protocols so that the head of the virtual school is involved in securing the most appropriate education for the child/young person. Ensure there is consultation with all parties, including the child/young person, and that any move is endorsed by a review.
- ▶ Create a coherent strategy to meet the educational and developmental needs of children aged 0-5 through high quality provision, and ensure their successful transfer to full time education, and the virtual school, at age 5.
- ▶ Provide specific training for designated teachers to enable them to respond to the needs of children who are looked after, including the effects of trauma and attachment difficulties.
- ▶ Encourage young people and care leavers to take advantage of the Northern England Care Leaver Activities and Student Support (NorthCLASS) to access support to higher education.
- ▶ Consistently support and celebrate the educational and personal success of our children and young people.

College 9 – 4 today,  
double IT and Double  
Enterprise. I like  
Fridays at college. IT is  
good for me, it is what  
I want to do when (if) I  
can get a job.

## 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.

### York's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care says:

- ▶ We will support you to lead a healthy and happy life.

### What we know about children and young people's experience:

#### Nationally (Ofsted Children's Care Monitor 2010)

- ▶ The survey did not ask specific questions about health, but children and young people said that the greatest threats to their safety and welfare were drugs (25% of respondents) and alcohol (17%). Smoking was mentioned by 5%.

#### Locally (Looked After Young People - Health Care Needs Research 2007)

- ▶ Young people agreed that they sometimes have particular health needs, and were not opposed in principle to health assessments.
- ▶ They wanted to keep their own GP after coming into care, and wanted their health information to be kept private at reviews.
- ▶ They wanted more information and more choice about where and how health assessments were done.

#### Locally (CYC Pledge Consultation 2011)

- ▶ No specific issues relating to physical health care provision were mentioned by children and young people.

We also know that some young people are choosing not to take part in the health assessments they are entitled to, and we need to know more about the reasons for this.

### What we have done so far:

- ▶ Put in place an effective system for health assessments of children and young people when they become looked after, so that their health needs can be addressed promptly. Action is being taken to ensure that this is effectively re-commissioned as health services are re-structured.
- ▶ Health commissioners have carried out research into children and young people's experiences of initial health assessments, but the results were affected by a low response rate, and more feedback is planned.
- ▶ Through the Cultural Offer to Looked After Children and Care Leavers, we prioritise and support access for Looked After Children and Young People to council-run sport and leisure activities.



**What we are going to do next:**

- ▶ Appoint a designated Looked After Children’s nurse to work with a wide range of professionals and agencies to ensure that Looked After Children and Young People receive appropriate health services.
- ▶ Develop and commission an integrated service for holistic initial and review health assessments for children and young people ages 0-18, through the planned Initial and Review Health Assessment projects, due to start in Autumn 2011.
- ▶ These services will be provided in accordance with the You’re Welcome initiative, which aims to make health provision more accessible and user friendly, and Looked After Children and Young People will be involved in their design.
- ▶ Find out why some young people don’t wish to take part in health assessments, and how the delivery of the service could be improved for them.
- ▶ Put in place better arrangements for the provision of health care to young people and care leavers who are no longer at school, and offer them choices in how they access health care and information.
- ▶ Ensure that the timeliness and quality of health assessments is monitored and the results used to continuously improve the service.



## 7. Emotional Wellbeing

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.

### York's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care says:

- ▶ We will support you to lead a healthy and happy life.

### What we know about children and young people's experience:

#### Locally (CYC Pledge Consultation 2011)

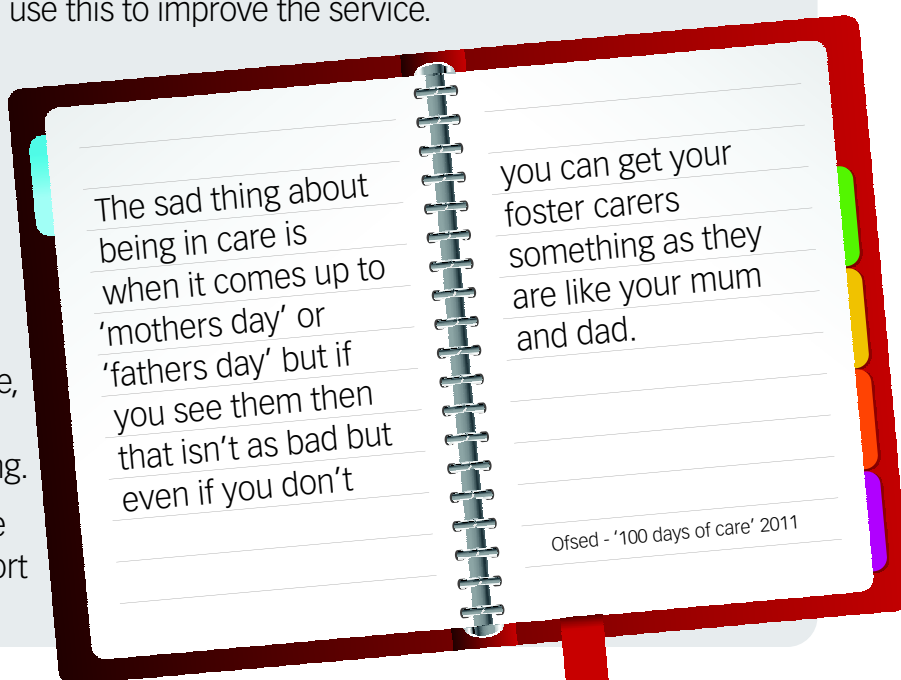
- ▶ The need for emotional support from a variety of sources was frequently mentioned, including the option to be supported by someone "separate from social work".
- ▶ Young people and care leavers identified their need for ongoing care and emotional support.

### What we have done so far:

- ▶ The multi-agency Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Looked After Children team provides children and young people with direct access to their service at the request of their social worker. Specialist interventions can be provided on completion of assessments.
- ▶ We have implemented the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) for all children and young people.

### What we are going to do next:

- ▶ Find out more about the impact on children and young people's emotional wellbeing of different CAMHS interventions, and use this to improve the service.
- ▶ Involve the CAMHS service more effectively when there are placement difficulties, so that placement moves due to behavioural issues are avoided as far as possible.
- ▶ Find out more about the emotional health of children and young people, to assess the effectiveness of services and inform service planning.
- ▶ Develop ways of providing effective emotional and mental health support to care leavers aged 18 and above.



## 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.

### York's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care says:

- ▶ To help with your move into adulthood we will support 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.

### What we know about children and young people's experience:

#### Nationally (Ofsted Children's Care Monitor 2010)

- ▶ 86% of young people soon to leave care said they were getting help to prepare for independence; 15% said they were getting no help.
- ▶ 60% rated the support they were getting as good or very good; 16% said it was bad or very bad.
- ▶ 70% of care leavers rated their accommodation as good or very good; 16% said theirs was bad or very bad.
- ▶ 58% of care leavers said they had Pathway plans.

#### Nationally (Evaluation of the Right 2B Cared 4 Pilots Final Report 2011)

- ▶ A slightly higher percentage of those in the pilot authorities felt that they had had a choice about when they left compared to those from comparator authorities, 62% and 52% respectively.

### What we have done so far:

- ▶ Set up a successful Staying Put programme, which means that the majority of young people remain with their carers beyond 18 and receive ongoing long term support from them.
- ▶ Taster and trainer flats are available for care leavers who wish to try independent living, though access to other types of supported accommodation is still limited.
- ▶ Young people can have a second chance to return to being looked after if leaving care does not work out for them.
- ▶ Established joint working with Youth Education Workers, Altogether Better and other agencies to run sessions for care leavers around budgeting, healthy lifestyles, etc.
- ▶ Effective use of Setting Up Home grants has delivered greater flexibility in meeting young people's changing needs.
- ▶ Developed a further education protocol to improve transitions from school to college.



- ▶ Established some Starting Blocks work placements, although there is still more to do on this.
- ▶ City of York Council has established 36 apprenticeships, for which care leavers will have priority consideration.
- ▶ We give support to young people in training or with low wages, to provide an incentive for them to continue.
- ▶ The CAMHS Looked After Children service runs a monthly drop in club for care leavers to enable them to access support with their emotional wellbeing.
- ▶ We have a care leaver in a Young Person's Participation apprenticeship in the Pathway team, working on encouraging care leavers to participate in social and leisure activities, and to contribute to service development and planning.

### What we are going to do next:

- ▶ Create more supported accommodation options, including some which can take young people with complex needs, including in emergencies.
- ▶ Ensure the sustainability of the Staying Put scheme by recruiting enough foster carers to replace those whose young people stay put.
- ▶ Develop a more consistent approach to preparing young people for independent living by creating a programme that builds up their skills and can be used in a variety of settings.
- ▶ Adopt a more structured approach to the identification of young people's skills and learning needs when they are moving to independent living, and include this in the planning process.
- ▶ Use the new provision at Howe Hill to build on and develop existing links with colleagues in housing, education and the voluntary sector, to increase the education, training and employment options available to care leavers.
- ▶ Further develop the opportunities for care leavers to access training and employment within the council, e.g. "employment with training", and ensure that HR processes are supporting the access of care leavers to jobs and apprenticeships.
- ▶ Clarify the process by which over 21s can access Pathway support when eligible.
- ▶ Put in place better arrangements for the provision of health care to young people and care leavers who are no longer at school, and offer them choices in how they access health care and information.
- ▶ Ensure there is easy access to mental health and counselling services for care leavers and young adults up to the age of 25.
- ▶ The Pathway Team will put in place a system of exit interviews for care leavers approaching 21 years, and use this information to improve the service.
- ▶ Jointly with other agencies, create more accessible social, leisure, sport and cultural opportunities for care leavers, to equip them to enjoy living independently.

- ▶ Improve the process of carrying out Pathway assessments, planning and reviews so that young people understand, are involved in and value these activities.
- ▶ Develop the work which has started with the group of foster carers who look after teenagers, so that they become our partners in monitoring, developing and reviewing the service.



## 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 Looked After Children and young people as good parents would in any family.

### York's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care says:

- ▶ The York Pledge is a promise by the council and its partners, which describes the quality and nature of care that any child can expect if they become looked after.

### What we know about children and young people's experience:

#### Locally (CYC Pledge Consultation 2011)

- ▶ Children and young people enjoyed the experience of being consulted and taking part in an activity which they felt would make the council listen to them.

### What we have done so far:

- ▶ Established regular elected member involvement with the Show Me That I Matter Group of Looked After Children and Young People, though Ofsted (Safeguarding Peer Review 2011) has told us that "more elected members should actively demonstrate their commitment to the corporate parenting agenda...".
- ▶ Made a pledge to York's children and young people about how we will look after them, and presented it to relevant groups for information.

### What we are going to do next:

- ▶ Ensure that the rights and particular needs of Looked After Children and Young People are fully represented in the forthcoming review of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for health and social care, and become embedded in the work of the future Health and Wellbeing Board and Children's Commissioning Group.
- ▶ Set up a Corporate Parenting Board which effectively involves a wide range of elected members in corporate parenting responsibilities.
- ▶ Equip the Corporate Parenting Board with the information, knowledge and skills to hold the rest of the council and its partners to account for the wellbeing of Looked After Children and Young People.
- ▶ Ensure that access to employment training and leisure activities provided by the council is prioritised for children in care and care leavers, and that this is enshrined in all its policies and procedures.

'If you have a problem, your words get listened to more than when you are with your parents.'

Ofsted - 'Having corporate parents' 2011

# Delivering, Monitoring and Reviewing Our Action Plan

A detailed annual action plan has been agreed across all agencies to support delivery of the priorities set out in this strategy.

The action plan addresses the nine priority areas, identifying a key lead and timeframe for the completion of each action.

This action plan specifies a planned outcome from each action described and identifies a related performance measure either drawn from the existing suite of performance indicators collected or newly created to monitor the progress of a specific action.

The new performance measures will be agreed with the **Show Me That I Matter Panel** and the **I Matter Too** Group. They will include at least two surveys annually to capture the views of the widest possible group of Looked After Children across the city and in out of city placements.

Progress against this action plan will be monitored quarterly by the Strategic Partnership for Looked After Children. The Chair of the partnership will, in turn, provide a regular briefing to the Children's Trust Board (YorOK).

The Corporate Parenting Board will meet regularly with the **Show Me That I Matter Panel** and the **I Matter Too** group to discuss the action plan and to identify any gaps in progress.

A schedule for the monitoring and review of the action plan to support the delivery of this strategy will be agreed with the Corporate Parenting Board on an annual basis.

The overall strategy will be reviewed in September 2014.

(Aims and expectations of the 'Show Me That I Matter' panel are in Annex 2 and The role of 'I Matter 2' can be found at Annex 3).

# Annex 1 – Planning arrangements

**Annex 1 shows where the Strategic Partnership for Looked after Children and the new Corporate Parenting Board are located within the emerging overall strategic framework following the creation of the Health and Wellbeing Board.**



## Annex 2

# Show Me That I Matter

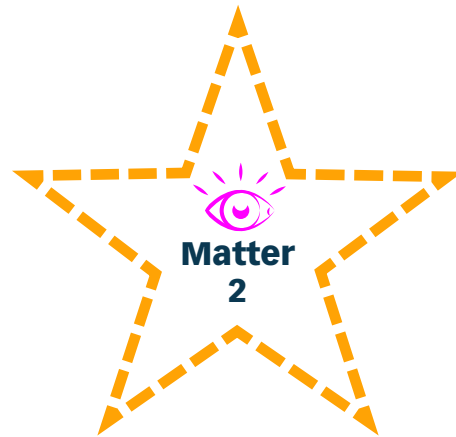
### **Aims**

The aim of Show Me that I Matter is to make things better for young people and children who are in care by listening to our views and taking action. In this way it is hoped that the service we receive will be improved and that young people, managers and City of York Councillors may all be involved together in working towards providing the best care possible.

### **Expectations of those participating**

- ▶ We will turn off our phones
- ▶ All participants will be punctual
- ▶ The same rules will be observed by everyone
- ▶ We will be courteous towards each other and with invited guests
- ▶ Breaks may be taken as needed if people are feeling under stress
- ▶ Everyone should have an equal chance to talk
- ▶ Discussion will be non-judgemental
- ▶ We will respect each others views
- ▶ Everyone will take turns to chair the meeting if possible
- ▶ We will respect the authority of the chairperson
- ▶ Membership will be reviewed after two years
- ▶ The group is for people who are, or have recently been, in care
- ▶ People who are not care experienced may only attend by invitation of the group
- ▶ Confidentiality will be respected
- ▶ Two elected council members will attend each meeting (using substitutes if they are unable to attend)
- ▶ The guidelines will be reviewed regularly
- ▶ Panel members will receive £15 per month in recognition of their time and commitment

## Annex 3



### What is it?

**I Matter 2** – We are a group of young people in care, aged between 11–14 years.

We meet on a monthly basis to talk about our experience of being looked after by the City of York Council and how we think things can be improved.

Our views are then shared with York's Children in Care Council (the **Show Me That I Matter** panel) who are able to raise these issues with senior managers and elected members.



# Annex 4 – The Pledge for Looked After Children (long version)

## 1. **Good quality placements will be found for all children and young people that need them.**

### **What this means:**

- ▶ The right foster family will be found for you based on the care you need.
- ▶ If a placement in a residential home or school would be better for you, then it will be as much like a family home as possible.
- ▶ Whenever possible, moving to a new placement will be planned with you and you will get the chance to visit and meet your carers before you move. If this can't happen then you will be told where you will be living and who will be caring for you before you actually move.
- ▶ Your placement will be close to your school, family and friends, wherever possible.
- ▶ Your placement will feel like a family home and you will be able to agree with your carers important things such as your friends being able to visit, having a set pocket money allowance and being allowed overnight stays.
- ▶ Your carers will help you to keep safe the things that are important to you, such as photographs and personal belongings, as we understand that these can be really important when looking back at your childhood.
- ▶ We will do our best to keep you placed with your brothers and sisters unless it's not safe to do so. If you can't live together, we will do our best to try to keep you close by to each other.
- ▶ You will only have to move placements if this is absolutely necessary. If you need to move from your carers for a short time to give you or your carers a break then, whenever possible, this will be planned with another carer you know.
- ▶ We will listen to you if you are unhappy with your placement and do everything we can to make things better for you. If we can't sort things out and you are still unhappy, we will find you another placement.
- ▶ If you need taxis to get to school or contact with family, we will make sure that they arrive on time and that the drivers are friendly. However, wherever possible you will be helped to travel independently or with your carers.



**2. We will help you to keep in contact with family and friends wherever possible.**

**What this means:**

- ▶ We will make sure that you can stay in touch and regularly see your family and friends, as long as it is safe to do so.
- ▶ You will know when, where and how often contact will take place.
- ▶ We know that contact with brothers and sisters is really important and will listen to you about how this should happen.

**3. You will have your own social worker who is reliable, trustworthy and who will listen and treat you with respect.**

**What this means:**

- ▶ We will make sure that your social worker sees you regularly, that they are reliable and that they will take you out or speak to you alone when they see you. We will not change your worker unless it's absolutely necessary.
- ▶ You will know how to get in touch with your social worker or another member of their team if they are not at work. You will have a mobile number for your social worker and if you leave a message they will get back to you as soon as possible.
- ▶ Your social worker will talk to you about why you are in care and will let you know what is happening throughout your time in care. You will have your chance to say what you think whenever any decisions are being made about you.
- ▶ If you don't get on with your social worker and ask for another one, we will listen and take you seriously. If it isn't possible to change your social worker we will explain to you why.
- ▶ Your social worker will support you throughout your time in care and they will act upon your wishes and feelings wherever possible.

**4. We will support and encourage you with your learning, education and training.**

**What this means:**

- ▶ Wherever possible, you will stay at the same school you were attending.
- ▶ You will not be made to feel different from your friends and your school will have all your information but they will keep it confidential. This will be part of your Personal Education Plan, which will be looked at regularly to make sure you are getting the right support.
- ▶ We understand that at times, when things have been unsettled, you may find it difficult to concentrate at school. You will be able to get support from a designated teacher or pupil support worker if you want this.

- ▶ You will have a say in how to spend any money that is there to support you with your learning (e.g. Personal Education Allowance).
- ▶ Opportunities for work experience will be available within the council, or we will try to set these up with another employer if you would prefer.
- ▶ If you apply for a job within the council, and meet the essential criteria, you will be guaranteed an interview.

**5. We will respect difference and support you as an individual.**

**What this means:**

- ▶ Everyone has different needs because of age, ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation or any disabilities we may have. We will recognise and respect those differences and treat you as an individual.
- ▶ You will always be treated as an individual and not as a group of children and young people.

**6. We will arrange your child care reviews in a way that best suits you and covers the things that are important to you.**

**What this means:**

- ▶ You will be encouraged to come to your meetings and you will get a say in where the meeting is held, how it is run, who attends and what is talked about. You can chair your own meeting alongside your independent reviewing officer if you would like to do so.
- ▶ We will do our best to make sure that you are included as an equal in the meetings and that you feel comfortable and supported enough to have your say. You can ask for someone to come to the meeting with you to support you or talk on your behalf if you would prefer. An independent advocate can do this.
- ▶ Meetings will be held in a way that makes you feel comfortable, able to say what you want and understand all the things that are talked about. The meetings will not just focus on the things that have been difficult but also on the things that have gone well for you.
- ▶ You will be able to speak to someone before the meeting to discuss these things, either your social worker, independent reviewing officer or an independent advocate.

**7. You will be made aware of your rights, choices and the things you are entitled to, including your right to complain if you are unhappy.**

**What this means:**

- ▶ You will be able to have your say when any decisions are being made about you and about the services you receive.

- ▶ You can contact the Rights and Advocacy Service if you want more information about your rights whilst in care, or if you want someone to help you to speak up or complain if you are unhappy about something.

## **8. We will support you to lead a healthy and happy life.**

### **What this means:**

- ▶ You will be registered with a local G.P., dentist and optician to make sure that you are healthy.
- ▶ If you want help in coping with any difficult feelings or memories that you may have, we can arrange for you to talk to someone about this (a specialist CAMHS worker).
- ▶ We will make sure that you have all the advice and support that you need to lead a healthy and happy life, whether that be about fitness, healthy eating, or information about sexual health or alcohol and drug misuse.

## **9. We will support any interests you may have and encourage you to take part in any activities that would be good for you.**

### **What this means:**

- ▶ We will help you to continue with any hobbies you enjoy and support any talents you may have. We promise to celebrate and acknowledge achievements you make on the way.
- ▶ We will encourage you to take part in social and cultural activities or groups that may help you feel more confident and good about yourself and will help you make new friends.
- ▶ You will be able to use the City of York Council's leisure services free of charge.
- ▶ We will help you to learn to drive when, and if, you want to.
- ▶ You will be able to use a computer and internet services in your placement to help you with your learning.

## **10. To help with your move into adulthood we will support 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.**

### **What this means:**

- ▶ With you, we will put together your pathway plan to make sure you are clear about the support you will get with training, housing, finance and emotional support when it is time for you to leave care.
- ▶ You will be given support in deciding what housing option would be right for you, such as taster flats, staying put choices or help to find independent accommodation.

- ▶ We will support and guide you in developing your independence skills if you need this.
- ▶ We will help to prepare you and support you emotionally with managing to live on your own, we will ensure you always have someone to contact and know how to access this support.

## Annex 5 - References

### Sources of information/references:

**About Education:** A Children's Views Report March 2007 [www.rights4me.org](http://www.rights4me.org).

**A User Experience Survey of Initial Health Assessments for Looked After Children in York, September 2011.**

**Care Matters:** Children's Views on the Governments Green Paper Feb 2007 [www.rights4me.org](http://www.rights4me.org).

**Care and Prejudice:** A Report of Children's Experience by the Children's Rights Director for England 2009 [www.rights4me.org](http://www.rights4me.org)

**Care Matters:** Time for Change, The White Paper, June 2007. [www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/timeforchange/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/timeforchange/)

**CYC 2007: Looked After Young People:** Health Care Needs, Research Report. Pathway Team, LCCS and the Market Research Team.

**CYC Pledge research report 2010:** Show Me That I Matter (York's Children in Care Council) and the Young People's Pledge Group and Nikki Wilson (Children's Rights Officer) and the Rights and Advocacy Service and Carol-Ann Hooper and Robert Gunn, Department of Social Policy & Social Work, University of York.

**DCSF Gifted and Talented Education and Guidance on preventing underachievement:** a focus on children and young people in care DCSF 00873-2007BKT-EN 2007. [www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications).

**DCSF.** Children looked after in England (including adoptions and care leavers), year ending 31 March 2008. DCSF, 2008, <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000810/sfr23-2008textv1.pdf>

**DCSF. Outcome indicators for looked after children:** twelve months to 30 September 2009 England. DCSF, 2009, <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000878/SFR25-2009.pdf>

**DCFS** Guidance on Looked After Children with SEN placed out of authority 2009 [www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications)

**DCSF** Improving Educational Attainment of Children in Care (Looked After Children) 2009 [www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications)

**DfES. Care matters:** transforming the lives of children and young people in care. DfES, 2006, <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/6731-DfES-Care%20Matters.pdf>

**Department of Health.** "Children looked after in England: 2001/2002". Website [www.doh.gov.uk](http://www.doh.gov.uk) accessed 7 February 2003

**Evaluation of the Right 2B Cared 4 Pilots:** Final report - Emily R. Munro\*, Clare Lushey\*, Harriet Ward\* and National Care Advisory Service \*Centre for Child and Family Research, Loughborough University, May 2011.

**Every Child Matters** website,  
<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/childrenincare/>

**Improving the attainment of LAC in primary schools:** Guidance for Schools DCSF 20.11.09 [www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications)

**Improving the attainment of LAC in secondary schools:** Guidance for Schools DCSF 20.11.09 [www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications)

**Looked After Children** – good practice in schools Issued May 2008 Reference no. 070172 [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**National Statistics.** Adoptions, outcomes and placements for children looked after by local authorities: year ending 31 March 2009  
<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2009/090826sdr1272009en.pdf?lang=en>

**Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.** Children Order Statistical Bulletin. 2009. [http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/children\\_order\\_statistical\\_bulletin\\_2008\\_final2.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/children_order_statistical_bulletin_2008_final2.pdf)

**Office of National Statistics;** The mental health of young people looked after by local authorities in England – summary report (Norwich, HMSO 2003)

**Ofsted 2011,** 100 days of care. Diary entries of children and young people in care, in residential education or receiving social care. Reported by the Children’s Rights Director for England.

**Ofsted 2011,** Before Care, A report of children’s views on entering care by the Children’s Rights Director for England.

**Ofsted 2011,** Children on Independent Reviewing Officers, A report of children’s views by the Children’s Rights Director for England.

**Ofsted 2011,** Children’s care monitor 2010. Children on the state of social care in England. Reported by the Children’s Rights Director for England.

**Ofsted 2011,** ‘Having corporate parents’

**Ofsted May 2008 Looked After Children** – Good Practice in Schools [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Ofsted 2011,** Messages for Munro, A report of children’s views collected for Professor Eileen Munro by the Children’s Rights Director for England.

**Report on research into pupil’s perceptions of Personal Education Plans – July 2011:** Lucy Barrow, Trainee Educational Psychologist.

**Scottish Government.** Children looked after statistics 2007-08  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/248579/0071293.pdf>



**Shaw, Catherine. Remember my messages.** The experiences and views of 2000 children in public care in the UK . The Who Cares? Trust, n.d.

**Social Exclusion Unit. A better education for children in care:** Social Exclusion Unit report . ODPM, 2003

**Social Exclusion Unit. Young runaways:** report by the Social Exclusion Unit. 2002

**Statutory Guidance** on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004 Issued 18.11.05

**Supporting looked after learners:** a practical guide for governors (DFES -1929-2005. [www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk) publications

**The Fostering Network.** "Kinship care", [http://www.fostering.net/resources/documents/ifco07\\_kinship\\_care.ppt](http://www.fostering.net/resources/documents/ifco07_kinship_care.ppt)

**The Role and Responsibilities of the designated teacher for LAC:** Statutory Guidance for school Governing Bodies DCSF 20.11.09 [www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications)

**Times Educational Supplement**, 5 June 2009, pp22-23, "Pupils in care: Balls wants no more excuses". <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6014863>

**Who Cares?** Trust. News Update, Summer 2008, January 2010





Working together with Children,  
Young People and Families

**This information can be provided in your own language.**


我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim własnym języku. (Polish)

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)

 **01904 551550**

If you would like this information in an accessible format (for example in large print, on CD or by email) or another language please telephone: 01904 554212 or email: [eoin.rush@york.gov.uk](mailto:eoin.rush@york.gov.uk)



Children and young people

# 10 questions to ask if you're scrutinising services for looked after children

---

# Introduction

---

This guide has been commissioned by Local Government Improvement and Development (LG Improvement and Development) and written by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS). It follows on from a previous guide produced by CfPS for LG Improvement and Development on scrutiny of children's safeguarding services, and forms part of a suite of offers for elected members and others around children's services.

LG Improvement and Development supports improvement and innovation in local government, focusing on the issues that are important to councils by working with them to develop and implement sector led support and challenge. The leadership and development programme for councillors is a key part of this. The Centre for Public Scrutiny is an independent national charity which carries out research, supports on-line networks and provides training, development and events to promote and improve public scrutiny and accountability across government and the public sector.

The author of this guide is Jessica Crowe, Executive Director of CfPS, and valuable comments, examples and advice have been provided by Claire Burgess of LG Improvement and Development and a group of elected members, officers and looked after children. Members of this group include: Rob Davison, Adam Hadley, Rob Mack, Sarah Morris, Julia Regan, Andrea Thwaite, Suzanne Triggs, Caroline Webb, Councillor Les Lawrence, Councillor Andrea Milner, and

looked after young people from Cheshire West and Chester. Thanks are due to all those who contributed their time, experience and expertise. Any mistakes are the author's own.

The guide is one of a series of '10 Questions to ask if you're scrutinising...' guides produced by CfPS on a range of topics. The guides aim to provide clear and succinct advice for scrutiny members and officers on the key issues to cover in a scrutiny review of that topic, as well as jargon-busting, links to further information and case studies.

The ten question areas and their detailed questions can be used by overview and scrutiny committees (OSCs) to scope a review that takes an overview of all services relevant to looked after children, or to focus on an area of particular interest. The questions can also be used to gather information during the course of the review and to frame evidence sessions with witnesses.

Please note that to the best of the author's knowledge all information is correct at the time of printing. However, it was produced shortly after the election of a new government in 2010 and the new government has committed to publishing a revised set of slimmed down guidance relating to care planning in March 2011. Readers are advised to check Department for Education website ([www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)) for the latest information.

---

# Key points

---

Children in the care of a local authority are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of children in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect. At any one time around 60,000 children are looked after in England, although some 90,000 pass through the care system each year.

When they are elected, all councillors take on the role of 'corporate parents' to children looked after by their local authority. They have a duty to take an interest in the well-being and development of those children, as if they were their own children. Although the lead member for children's services has particular responsibilities, the responsibility to act as corporate parents is held by all councillors, regardless of their role on the council.

Overview and scrutiny offers a key way in which councillors can fulfil this responsibility, by giving councillors the opportunity to ask searching questions of a range of service providers and assure themselves that children in the care of the local authority are being well looked after.

Overview and scrutiny also offers opportunities for councillors to hear directly from children looked after by the authority and to ensure that their voices are heard when considering the effectiveness and impact of services. This should include not just children's care services, but other areas which may have an impact on the lives of children in care (and leaving care), such as housing provision, crime and feeling safe in

the community, access to public transport, the quality of schools and leisure activities.

In March 2010 the government introduced new regulations and guidance to improve the quality and consistency of care planning, placement (where and how children are looked after) and case review for looked after children. It includes statutory guidance on independent reviewing officers, the 'sufficiency duty' requiring local authorities to ensure there is enough accommodation locally for looked after children, as well as guidance on improving their educational attainment.

This was part of the implementation of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and the Care Matters White Paper, and it updated and consolidated previous guidance around the 1989 Children's Act and other legislation. Slimmed down guidance is anticipated from the new government by April 2011. At time of writing the 1989 Act, 2008 Act and March 2010 guidance provide the basic statutory framework governing services for looked after children.

This document also refers to a number of performance indicators for children's services which were part of the National Indicator Set. These NIs are to be replaced with a single agreed list of 'Whitehall data requirements'. Authorities may still want to collect such information to help them manage and compare their own performance so the references to NIs have been left as they mostly capture the key performance questions.



---

# Jargon-busting

---

## ‘Looked after children’, ‘children in care’

The term children in care includes: all children being looked after by a local authority; those subject to a care order under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 (see below); and those looked after by a voluntary agreement with their parents under section 20 of that Act. They may be looked after by family members, foster carers or staff in a residential children’s home. Children and young people from overseas become ‘looked after’ if they have no one with parental responsibility in this country.

## Children ‘at risk’ of harm

These are children about whom there are concerns that they are or may be at risk of suffering harm through abuse or neglect. Children considered ‘at risk’ have a Child Protection Plan which should be regularly reviewed.

## ‘Children in need’

Children in need are a wider group of children and young people who have been assessed as needing the help of services to achieve a reasonable standard of health or development. They have a Child in Need Plan to address the difficulties identified in the assessment

## ‘Care leavers’

Care leavers are those who have been in public care for at least 13 weeks from the age of 14 onwards and therefore qualify for services to support them once they leave. This may be at 16 or up until 24 if they remain in full-time education.

## Care Order – Section 31 Children Act 1989

Care Orders are made by the court if a ‘threshold of significant’ harm is reached and there is no likelihood of improvement in the standard of care provided for a young person. The local authority then shares parental responsibility with the parent(s) and can make the decisions that a parent would normally make. A Care Order expires when the young person reaches 18 (or sometimes 19) years of age, or when an Adoption Order is made and the child is permanently adopted.

## Interim Care Order – Section 38 Children Act 1989

If the local authority is concerned that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer ‘significant harm’, they can apply to the court for an Interim Care Order, which is a time-limited order renewed while care proceedings for the child continue through the courts and other authorities.

## Emergency Protection Order Section 44 Children Act 1989

An Emergency Protection Order removes a child into accommodation provided by or on behalf of the local authority and is granted by the court if there is reasonable cause to believe that the child is likely to suffer significant immediate harm.

## Regulation 33 visits (now regulations 29-33)

What used to be known as 'Regulation 33' visits are the management inspections that have to be made regularly of residential care homes, and during which the visitor should speak to any staff and residents who may be present during the visit.

## The 'sufficiency duty'

This is a duty placed on local authorities under 22 (G) of the Children Act 1989 (amended by the 2008 Act) to ensure there is sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of their looked after children. Sufficient accommodation must be provided 'where reasonably practical' (lack of resources is not considered a barrier), and having 'regard to the benefit of having a number of providers and a range of accommodation'.

## Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 requires local authorities to appoint a named IRO for each looked after child who will spend time with that child prior to any review of their care plan so that they personally establish the child's wishes and feelings and can ensure that these contribute to the review.

## The Pledge

The Care Matters White Paper envisaged the Pledge, or as young people preferred to call it, 'the promise', as a key communication tool between children and young people and the authority responsible for ensuring they receive the parenting they need. Every child and young person's care or pathway plan must reflect how the commitments made in the Pledge will be delivered for that individual child and it will be monitored by the local Children in Care Council (see below).

## Children in Care Councils

The Care Matters White Paper and the subsequent Act required local authorities to set up a Children in Care Council to enable regular, good quality dialogue and involvement in developing and delivering services. There should also be mechanisms in place for involving young people in care in the recruitment of key staff members, such as the Director of Children's Services. The local Children in Care Council will be responsible for helping develop and monitor the implementation of the Pledge to children and young people about the care they receive.

## Commissioning

The process by which an authority decides what level and type of services it wants in order to meet identified needs, and seeks providers of those services, often through a competitive process. Increasingly this is done jointly, for example with the local health service, and in the context of looked after children should be focused around the needs of individual children. Commissioned services should be monitored and evaluated, and the process of decommissioning is also important to understand.





**10 questions to ask when you're scrutinising issues and services affecting looked after children.**

## 1

## How well does your authority do in commissioning or providing services for looked after children, including in comparison with other similar authorities?

There are currently a number of national indicators of performance which enable you to assess how well your local authority is doing in comparison with others (although these are to be replaced with a smaller set of “Whitehall data requirements”). These can be useful in analysing trends and seeing if your area is significantly different from other similar areas. As corporate parents, councillors need access to this basic performance information to enable you to ask questions of those responsible, but bear in mind that scrutiny should not duplicate the work of the council’s own performance management. Ofsted reviews can provide a useful source of information on performance and trends but data needs careful interpretation as performance depends strongly on context.

- How many looked after children are there per 10,000 children?
- Who are your looked after children in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or cultural background and disability, and what needs and challenges does this profile present?
- What percentage of looked after children cases are reviewed within the set timescale? (NI66)
- Do children understand what’s happening in their reviews and what’s going to happen as a result of their case review? Does anyone ask them this?

Commissioning of services is becoming increasingly important and members need to ensure that arrangements are robust and secure ‘value for money’ (particularly in the light of current and future cost pressures) and also that they work in the best interests of the children.

- How many services are jointly commissioned, either with other authorities or with partner agencies such as the Health Services?
- How will any changes in local health service structures, for example the proposed move to GP commissioning, impact on any joint commissioning arrangements?

Cost comparisons can be a good indicator of how effectively your authority is providing or commissioning services, for example:

- How much does it spend on court costs compared with other similar authorities and why?
- What level are directly commissioned foster carers’ fees set at and how much is spent on private and voluntary sector fostering agency fees?
- What is the cost of your residential provision by comparison with other areas?
- How much do you spend on out-of-area placements for looked after children? Is this rising or falling?



## 2

## How well do your children in care do at school, both academically and in terms of other kinds of achievements?

In 2008, 14 per cent of looked after children achieved five A\*-C grades at GCSE, compared to 65.3 per cent for all children. Ensuring looked after children have the right support to be able to participate fully in school life, and that their school career is not disrupted by constant placement moves can make a big difference. They may well have lost out on education because of the circumstances which led to them entering care and need help to catch up – a high proportion of looked after children see entering care as having been good for their education.

- What results are achieved by looked after children compared with other children at local schools, eg what proportion of looked after children get 5 A\*-C GCSEs (NI101)?
- What plans does the council have to raise the educational attainment of looked after children?
- Are looked after children able to attend homework clubs and what support is provided to gifted children as well as those who may need to catch up? What difference is this support making?
- Do you know how well looked after children do at school if they are in placements outside your local authority area and attend non-local schools?
- How do schools' admissions policies treat looked after children, for example are they able to attend the same school as other children in their foster family, and how

many looked after children get into the highest performing schools?

- How do the admissions and other policies of any local academies, foundation schools or new 'free schools' treat looked after children?
- Do you have a 'virtual school head' (a post designated to look after all looked after children in schools across the local area, as if they were in a single school), designated teachers and designated school governors in place? How effective are these arrangements?

In one authority looked after children often missed out on after school activities and trips because of delays in getting permission from social services. As a result of the scrutiny review which brought this to light, social workers signed blanket permissions, enabling foster carers to sign permission slips for individual activities and ensuring looked after children could take part.

Celebrating the non-academic achievements of children in care and enabling them to benefit from all the opportunities school can offer is also important. Children in care should be cared *about* and not just cared *for*.

- Are looked after children able to participate in after-school activities and enjoy learning and achievement in all its forms? If not, what are the barriers?

- Does your council have a way to celebrate the achievements (whether sporting, academic, musical, attendance, personal bests) of looked after children, and are councillors given regular updates?
- What do looked after children and young people themselves say about school?

In one authority a young person was unable to attend an after school photography course because for two years no-one would buy her a camera: when this came to light during a scrutiny review, councillors intervened and got action taken to sort it out.





## 3

## How good is the health and wellbeing of children in your care?

Looked after children and young people share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but they frequently enter care with a worse level of health due to the impact of poverty, abuse and neglect. Evidence suggests that looked after children are nearly five times more likely to have a mental health disorder than all children. Local authorities, primary care trusts and strategic health authorities must currently have regard to statutory guidance issued in November 2009 on promoting the health and well-being of looked after children, which requires children in care to have a personal health plan.

- Are looked after children a priority group for getting access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and how long are waiting times for referrals?
- As an at risk group, what access do looked after children and young people get to services to help with substance misuse, sexual health and teenage pregnancy?
- What support is given to foster carers and young people themselves about promoting healthy lifestyles?
- What do looked after children and young people themselves say about their health needs and priorities and how well they are met?



## 4

## How stable and secure are the lives of your looked after children while they are in your care?

When children and young people enter care and are placed either with foster carers, in residential homes or even at boarding school, they often lose regular contact not only with their family members but also with other familiar friends, teachers etc. This is exacerbated if the 'placement' has to be out of the area, perhaps because of a lack of local foster families or places in residential homes. If the placement breaks down, they may have to move again, causing yet more anxiety and disruption. Ensuring placements are stable and work well for children and young people is therefore key to their well-being. There are a couple of indicators that your council currently has to measure its performance against but also other issues to explore.

- What percentage of looked after children move placements three or more times during a year ie how stable are your placements? (NI62).
- What percentage of children live in the same placement for 2 or more years? (NI63).
- What choice and information do children and young people have about their placements, eg do they get to meet potential foster carers or visit children's homes before they go to live there?
- If children have to move placement, what arrangements are made to keep them at the same school, for example transport?

As a result of one authority's scrutiny review, a looked after children and care leavers' drop-in centre was developed, to provide a safe space for looked after children and young people to go to find out information and meet support workers and others in one place.



## 5

## How well does your authority do at finding appropriate adoptive families for children for whom it is decided this is the right option?

If a child or young person's birth family relationships have completely broken down then the best option for a long-term stable family environment may be permanent adoption. Nationally, however, there is a mismatch between the profile of children looked after and prospective adopters. The law governing adoption is in the Adoption and Children Act 2002, which aligned adoption practice with the 1989 Children Act, making the welfare of the child the paramount consideration.

- What percentage of children are placed for adoption within 12 months of the decision to adopt and are subsequently adopted? (NI61).
- How long does it take to make the decision to place a child for adoption, particularly for new-born babies?
- What is the profile of the children in care compared with prospective adoptive families, and if there is an imbalance, what steps are being taken to address this, eg to recruit more adopters by emphasising the positive messages about the process and value of adopting?
- How are sibling groups treated and what steps are taken to ensure they stay together, whether in adoption, fostering or residential care?
- What cross-border arrangements are there for adoption, including overseas?
- What do children and young people, for example in your local Children in Care Council, say about adoption processes?



## 6

## How well do your foster care arrangements work?

Nationally, the proportion of children in care placed with foster parents as opposed to residential homes has risen to about two-thirds. This is partly due to the comparative costs of the two options but also due to a changed policy approach, as fostering enables children and young people to live in a family environment rather than an institutional one.

Foster carers can play a hugely valuable role in stabilising and caring for children from disrupted home environments for both short and longer periods of time, but nationally there is a shortage of people willing to take on the role. In the 1990s, independent / private fostering agencies developed, which placed pressure on local authority budgets as their fees were higher than those paid directly to councils' own foster carers. Issues around support for foster carers, the rate of fees and allowances and their access to information may all play a role in ensuring they can support the children they look after in the most effective way.

An area of growing concern is around private or kinship fostering, where children stay with extended family or friends in a private, often informal, arrangement, as this is an under-regulated area. Teachers or the local GP may realise that a child is no longer living at home with their parents but often the information is not passed on and there is no way of knowing whether the arrangement is in the child's best interests.

- Do you have a sufficient pool of suitable foster carers locally to meet the needs of and match the children needing placements? If not, what steps are being taken to address this?
- What support is given to your foster carers and how easily can they access it, for example therapeutic support and help?
- What do foster carers themselves say about the support they receive, including out-of-hours support and about their relationships with social workers and other professionals?
- Is there more 'in-kind' support that would facilitate and make the fostering role easier, such as bus passes, access to leisure centres etc?
- What do looked after children and young people themselves say about their experience of fostering?
- What does the authority or other agencies know about any kinship fostering arrangements and are people encouraged to share information or concerns?

Dreamwalls project in Southampton provides 'time-out' breaks for foster carers and has reduced by 95 per cent the proportion of foster carers leaving fostering. The cost equated to £674.43 per child per year, and 182 children received the service. Using the social return on investment (SROI) method of calculating value and benefits as well as costs, there was a £1.63 return for every £1.00 invested in the project.

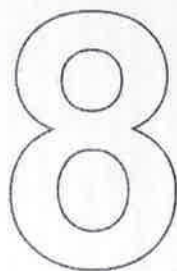
## 7

## How good is the standard of any residential care provided or used by your authority?

Despite the move away from large residential institutions, many authorities have retained smaller residential units which may be suitable for children and young people who find it difficult to cope with family-based life as a result of their experiences. Councillors have said that taking part in what are known as 'Regulation 33' visits or other arranged visits to homes can really bring to life what it is like to live in residential care, although they have to be carried out with sensitivity. Ofsted inspects residential homes and these reports (along with the reports from Regulation 33 visits) should provide a source of information and assurance to scrutiny about the standard of care provided there.

- If children and young people are placed in residential homes out of your area, particularly if they have to go to schools under a different education authority, what information do you get about how well they are doing or about the standard of the homes where they live, and what influence do you have to improve things?
- What do looked after children and young people themselves say about their experience of living in residential care?
- How are any complaints about standards of care in residential homes and issues such as bullying dealt with? How many are there and what happens as a result?

In Kirklees, looked after children can access the Kick (Kids in care Kirklees) website. From here they can go on a virtual tour of all the residential homes by watching a video made and narrated by looked after young people who live there, to tell them what it's like. The website also enables them to 'rate' their reviews and foster placements on-line, as well as read, listen to and watch first hand accounts of children and young people's experiences of care.



## What support does your authority provide to young people leaving care and how effective is it?

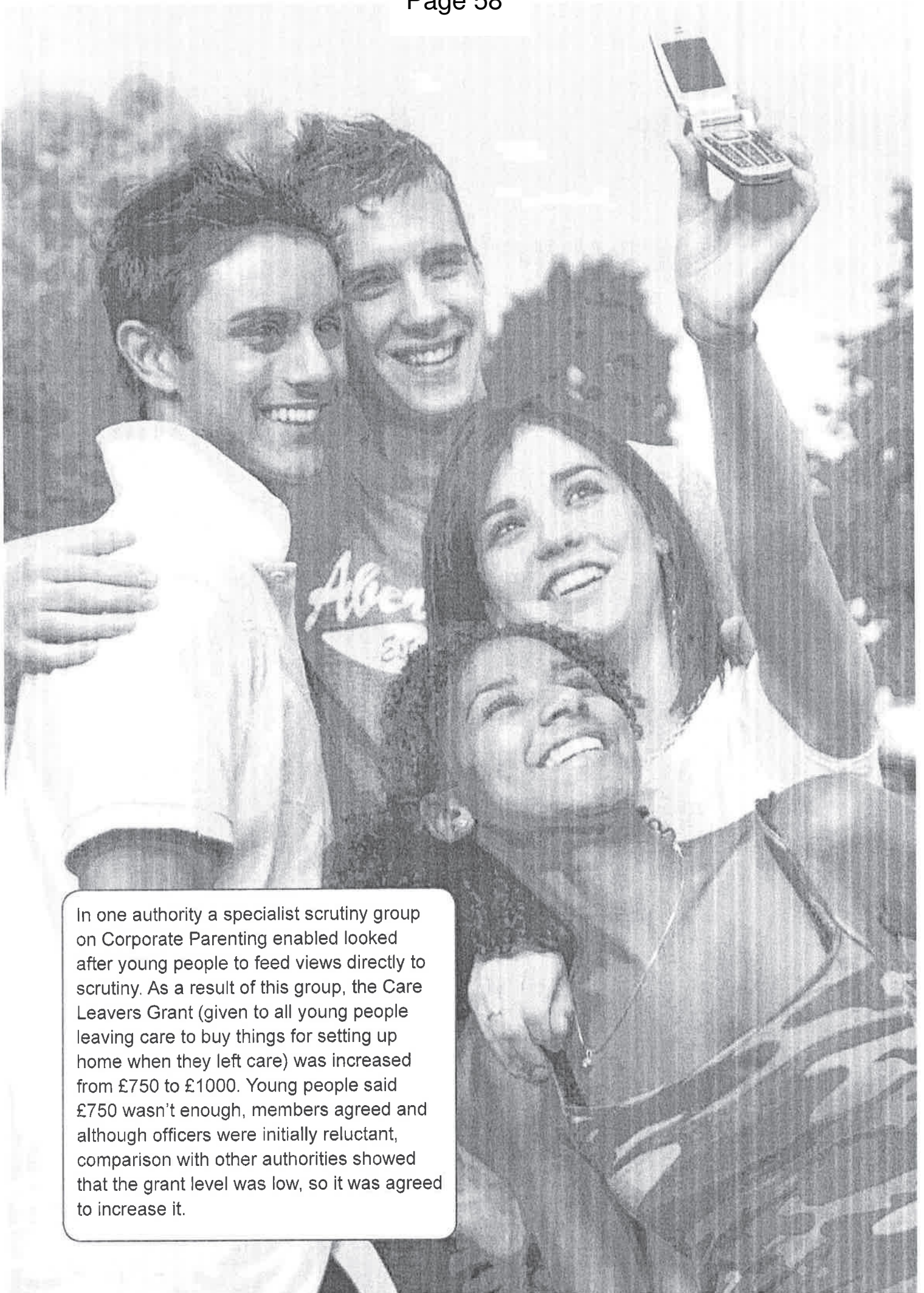
For many young people, leaving care can be daunting and confusing. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 sets out local authorities' responsibilities to help children leaving care develop a 'pathway plan' to independence, with the help of a personal adviser. While care can end at the age of 16, it will continue until age 18 if the child remains at school. Continuing assistance with education or training continues to the end of the agreed programme, even if it takes some past the age of 21.

Care leavers are still over-represented in prison populations and the unemployed, demonstrating that the experience of being in – and leaving – care still does not prepare young people well for adult life. If looked after children followed the same paths as other children into further education, training and jobs, it could save the economy £50 million each year.

In Rotherham, scrutiny called representatives from Job Centre Plus, the council's Revenues and Benefits and Care Leavers Services to a hearing following concerns expressed by care leavers about distress caused by late payments of benefits. The NCH Bridges Project reported that since the intervention of scrutiny, delays in processing benefits for care leavers were much reduced. As well as reducing the further risk of social and financial exclusion to vulnerable care leavers, there was also a reduction in the number of emergency payments to care leavers.

- How many care leavers is your authority still in touch with a year after they have left the care of the authority? How many are they in touch with after three years?
- Are former looked after children ever asked to help children currently in care by talking about their experience or giving advice?
- What do you know about the life outcomes of the children who were formerly in your authority's care?
- How many formerly looked after young people are NEETs (not in education, employment and training)?
- What support do young people leaving care receive around access to housing, tenancy support, employment, access to benefits, further and higher education and training? For example, does the local authority offer apprenticeships to care leavers or support with CV writing and interviews? What happens as a result?
- What do former looked after children and young people themselves say about their experience of leaving care and the support that is / was provided?





In one authority a specialist scrutiny group on Corporate Parenting enabled looked after young people to feed views directly to scrutiny. As a result of this group, the Care Leavers Grant (given to all young people leaving care to buy things for setting up home when they left care) was increased from £750 to £1000. Young people said £750 wasn't enough, members agreed and although officers were initially reluctant, comparison with other authorities showed that the grant level was low, so it was agreed to increase it.

## 9

## How effective is your professional workforce of social workers and others responsible for running services for and working with looked after children?

Many authorities have struggled to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of suitably qualified social workers to manage their workload and do the difficult job of working with vulnerable children. This can be a key cause of poor performance around reviewing cases on time and picking up and acting on issues raised by children, foster carers and others. While senior officers are responsible for managing staff and services, members can play an important role in checking that officials beyond social services departments are aware of their responsibilities to looked after children, for example in housing departments, environment and leisure services, education, legal services and the health service.

- Do they have time for therapeutic work with looked after young people or do they get bogged down in paper work and what management action is taken to address this?
- What do looked after children and young people, foster carers and prospective adopters say about their experience of engaging with social workers and other professionals?
- Are looked after children and young people involved in recruitment and development of services?
- What are levels of social work staff vacancies, turnover, stress-related sickness, use of agency staff and ratios between newly qualified and experienced social workers and what action are management taking to address these? Are they learning from innovative schemes elsewhere to manage staff resources most effectively?
- What continuity of social worker support is there for looked after children and what are the case loads carried by social work staff?
- Is there evidence that staff from across the authority and other partners are working together to deliver what looked after children need?
- What attitude do social workers have to their work? Do they enjoy working with children and young people?



# 10

## What more could be done to fulfil the council's responsibilities as a 'corporate parent'?

It may be impossible to expect all elected members to share the same level of commitment to the issue of looked after children. However, they do share the same level of responsibility and so there are certain basic expectations of the systems, processes and support that should be in place to enable them to fulfil that role. As former Secretary of State Frank Dobson MP's original letter to all councillors about their role as corporate parents, launching the Quality Protects Programme in 1998, said:

"Elected councillors have a crucial role. Only you can carry it out. You can make sure that the interests of the children come first. You bring a fresh look and common sense. As councillors you set the strategic direction of your council's services and determine policy and priorities for your local community within the overall objectives set by Government."

Crucial to fulfilling this role is ensuring councillors can hear directly from looked after children about what matters to them. This could be through informal discussions, visits by elected members to residential homes or involving looked after children and young people when reviewing services of interest to them.

It is not only councillors who are corporate parents. Council officers across the council (not just in children's services departments) share in the responsibility and other partners also have a duty to cooperate to ensure looked after children's needs are met.

- Do looked after children and young people know who their 'corporate parents' are? What do they say about what they expect from local councillors and others acting as their 'corporate parents'?
- Do all members receive mandatory training on their roles and responsibilities as corporate parents when they are elected and is this refreshed during their term of office?
- Are there appropriate opportunities for elected members to meet and listen to looked after children and young people, and to celebrate and praise their achievements when they do well?
- Is there an active Children in Care Council which regularly meets with elected members and others in authority (across the council and other partners) to express the views and needs of looked after children locally?
- How are children and young people's complaints responded to and what is learnt from them?

One authority has encouraged councillors to 'adopt' a residential home in order to encourage greater responsibility for and interest in each home by elected members and provide continuity between visits. These members could be important witnesses to any scrutiny inquiry.

**Cheshire West & Chester Council  
Every Child Matters Select Panel**

Our Children Matter – 39 steps to help bring some normality into their lives – a review which won the CfPS 2010 Good Scrutiny Award for Innovation due to the depth and extent of its active involvement of looked after young people in gathering evidence for the review. They spent days out at Go Ape and the zoo, and are now involved in other scrutiny reviews and activities influencing the council. The report is available in the CfPS library: <http://tiny.cc/fcoge> and a summary can be found in Successful Scrutiny 2010, available here: <http://tiny.cc/7xj56>





---

# Case studies

---

## **LB Camden**

### **Corporate Parenting Scrutiny Committee**

Children Looked After by Camden – early scrutiny pilot examining Camden’s performance as a corporate parent. The review took written and oral evidence, members visited children’s homes and other consultation events, and sent questionnaires to LAC, care leavers and foster carers. Report available on LB Camden website: <http://tiny.cc/jsntm>

## **Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Scrutiny Review Group**

The Role of Councillors as Corporate Parents – a review that compared Rotherham’s performance with other authorities. It heard from looked after children and young people, foster carers and others, and recommended a clearer focus and commitment, including more regular opportunities for members to meet looked after children. Report available in CfPS library: <http://tiny.cc/6pfck>

## **Derby City Council Children & Young People Commission**

Looked After Children – a cross cutting review for which evidence-gathering was conducted in one intensive week of interviews and meetings, and with a follow-up meeting to finalise the report and recommendations. These cover social work, fostering and residential placements, adoption, health, leaving & aftercare and education. Report available in CfPS library: <http://tiny.cc/uzda5>

## **Buckinghamshire County Council Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Maximising the Potential of Looked After Children – a review examining issues affecting educational attainment of looked after children in the county, including post-16 and their ability to participate in other aspects of school life. Recommendations focus on support at transition stages and support for foster carers to enable them to better support the children they look after. The report is available in the CfPS library: <http://tiny.cc/g1dt6>

## **Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Children & Young People’s Scrutiny Panel**

Looked After Children & Young People – a review to examine whether all agencies in Sandwell were continuing to improve in relation to corporate parenting support. Young people from the Looked After Children Board acted as strategic advisers to the scrutiny review and closely informed the findings and recommendations. The report is available in the CfPS library: <http://tiny.cc/9yvno>

---

# References and further information

---

*Example of Good*

## **Key Legislation**

Children Act 1989

<http://tiny.cc/qrzro>

Adoption and Children Act 2002

<http://tiny.cc/lf98m>

Children and Young Persons Act 2008

<http://tiny.cc/951i3>

## **Care planning, placements and case review regulations (England) 2010 and statutory guidance**

These documents specify the current requirements for care plans, including health and education plans, placement decisions and monitoring, and case reviews. They consolidate previous regulations and guidance, providing a central source of reference for local authorities' work with looked after children and can be found on the old Every Child Matters website:

<http://tiny.cc/7xt9g>

The government has committed to publishing a revised set of slimmed down guidance relating to care-planning in March 2011. See the new Department for Education website for information on the policy reviews underway: <http://tiny.cc/7xt9g>

## **Welcome to Corporate Parenting – a Councillor Development Learning Resource**

A booklet and audio CD produced by Kirklees, Bradford and Calderdale Councils working with a group of looked after young people.

Contact: Angie Aspinall, Councillor Development Officer, Kirklees Council, [angie.aspinall@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:angie.aspinall@kirklees.gov.uk) or 01484 416 930

## **Improving Educational Outcomes for Looked After Children and Young People, and Improving the Emotional and Behavioural Health of Looked After Children and Young People**

2 useful Knowledge Reviews containing detailed evidence of what works, produced by the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children's Services (C4EO), September 2010, available on [www.c4eo.org.uk](http://www.c4eo.org.uk)

Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice, Developing an effective approach.

A useful guide for scoping a review on corporate parenting, by Hart, D and Williams, A (2008) National Children's Bureau [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk)

*Practice*

*Penny  
Bunker*

**Local Government Improvement and Development**

Layden House  
76–86 Turnmill Street  
London EC1M 5LG  
Telephone 020 7664 3000  
Facsimile 020 7664 3030  
Email [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)  
[www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

**Centre for Public Scrutiny**

Local Government House  
Smith Square  
London SW1P 3HZ  
Telephone 020 7187 7360  
Facsimile 020 7665 3887

[www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk)

CfPS is a registered charity: number 1136243



© Local Government Improvement and Development,  
February 2011

For a copy in Braille, Welsh, larger print or audio,  
please contact us on 020 7664 3000.  
We consider requests on an individual basis.



# Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services

City of York Council

---

**Inspection dates:** 19 to 30 March 2012  
**Reporting inspector:** Mary Varley HMI

**Age group:** All  
**Published:** 14 May 2012



---

© Crown copyright 2012

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the local authority or at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

## Contents

<b>About this inspection</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The inspection judgements and what they mean</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Service information</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Safeguarding services</b>	<b>5</b>
Overall effectiveness	5
Capacity for improvement	5
<b>Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people</b>	<b>8</b>
Children and young people are safe and feel safe	8
Quality of provision	9
The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe	12
Ambition and prioritisation	15
Leadership and management	16
Performance management and quality assurance	18
Partnership working	20
<b>Services for looked after children</b>	<b>22</b>
Overall effectiveness	22
Capacity for improvement	23
<b>How good are outcomes for looked after children and care leavers?</b>	<b>25</b>
Being healthy	25
Staying safe	26
Enjoying and achieving	28
Making a positive contribution, including user engagement	29
Economic well-being	30
Quality of provision	31
Ambition and prioritisation	33
Leadership and management	34
Performance management and quality assurance	36
<b>Record of main findings</b>	<b>38</b>

---

## About this inspection

1. The purpose of the inspection is to evaluate the contribution made by relevant services in the local area towards ensuring that children and young people are properly safeguarded and to determine the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers. The inspection team consisted of four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one inspector from the Care Quality Commission. The inspection was carried out under the Children Act 2004.
2. The evidence evaluated by inspectors included:
  - discussions with more than 45 children and young people receiving services, 23 parents and carers, front-line staff and managers, senior officers including the Director of Children's Services and the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, elected members and a range of community representatives
  - interviews and focus groups with front-line professionals, managers and senior staff from NHS North Yorkshire and York, York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust and Leeds and York Partnership Foundation Trust
  - analysing and evaluating reports from a variety of sources including a review of the Children and Young People's Plan, performance data, information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day care provision and the evaluations of serious case reviews undertaken by Ofsted in accordance with '*Working Together To Safeguard Children*', 2010
  - a review of over 90 case files, assessments or reports for children and young people with a range of need. This provided a view of services provided over time and the quality of reporting, recording and decision-making undertaken
  - the outcomes of the most recent annual unannounced inspection of local authority contact, referral and assessment services undertaken on 16 and 17 November 2010.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

3. All inspection judgements are made using the following four point scale.

Outstanding (Grade 1)	A service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
Good (Grade 2)	A service that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate (Grade 3)	A service that only meets minimum requirements
Inadequate (Grade 4)	A service that does not meet minimum requirements

## Service information

4. York is a distinctive city with an impressive history and heritage and a strongly performing economy. The city has successfully adapted from being a railway and confectionery manufacturing city into an international destination and hub for science and technology, and a national centre for financial and business services. Average incomes are just below the national average. The unemployment rate has risen since 2005, although it is lower than the national average. While 40% of York's population live in areas that are in the least deprived 20% in England, 7% of York's population live in areas classified as being in the 20% most deprived areas in the country.
5. There are approximately 37,700 children and young people aged 0 to 18, which is 19% of the total population of the area. In 2012, 9% of the school population was classified as belonging to an ethnic group other than White British compared to 22.5% in England overall. Some 5% of pupils speak English as an additional language. Polish, Chinese and Turkish are the most recorded commonly spoken community languages.
6. At the time of the inspection there were 250 looked after children. This comprises 61 children less than five years of age, 148 children of school age and 41 young people aged over 16. Some 164 children were the subject of a child protection plan, 41% of whom were aged five or younger.
7. The YorOK Children's Trust was set up as a national pathfinder in 2003. The trust includes representatives from the council, schools, health agencies, the police, voluntary and community sector, early years, further and higher education and other independent organisations.
8. The City of York Safeguarding Children Board (CYSCB) was established and became independently chaired in 2006, bringing together the main organisations providing safeguarding services for children, young people and families in the area.
9. Early years provision is delivered predominantly through the private and voluntary sector in over 84 settings including school nurseries, nurseries, playgroups, 208 childminders and 56 out-of-school clubs. The nine children's centres are all based on school sites. There are 65 schools comprising 52 primary schools, 10 secondary schools, including two academies, two special schools and an all-age pupil referral unit which includes an outreach service and work-based learning provision. Post-16 provision is made through five school sixth-forms, the secondary special

school and two further education colleges. Looked after children's education is overseen and coordinated through a virtual school system.

10. Social care services for children and young people and their families are provided by six practice units as well as the children's advice and assessment service, adoption and fostering teams, the pathway service for care leavers and the health and disability team. The North Yorkshire and York emergency duty team provide the out of hours services. There are 126 local fostering households and two children's homes, one of which provides short-break care. Other family support services are delivered through children's centres and extended services in schools.
11. The police service is provided by the North Yorkshire Police. Services to children and young people who are at risk of offending or who have offended are provided by the council's multi-agency youth offending service.
12. The planning and commissioning of health services and primary care are carried out by North Yorkshire and York Primary Care Trust (PCT). The main provider of acute hospital and community child health services is the York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. Emergency services for children are provided by York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, and for minor ailments, the GP practice or the walk-in centre. Community-based and in-patient child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) are provided by Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. Maternity and newborn services along with universal health services, such as health visiting, school nursing and paediatric therapies are provided by York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. Children and families access primary care services through one of 21 GP practices and one walk-in centre.

## Safeguarding services

### Overall effectiveness

### Grade 2 (good)

13. The overall effectiveness of the council and its partners in safeguarding and protecting children in the City of York is good. Safeguarding requirements are met and often exceeded; no child was found to be at risk of significant harm during the inspection. Visible, child-centred and effective leadership by senior managers is sustaining and further improving already good outcomes. Almost all performance indicators are better than the averages for similar areas and nationally. The quality of strategic and operational partnership working is exceptional. The YorOK Children's Trust and the City of York Safeguarding Children Board (CYSCB) work well together. An embedded culture of support and challenge is also reflected in excellent joint commissioning arrangements. The council has sustained its financial commitment to the most vulnerable children in challenging financial circumstances and resources are very well used to underpin this priority.
14. Demonstrable improvements in the quality and range of provision have been secured in relation to early intervention with vulnerable children, including those whose emotional health and well-being gives cause for concern, and children experiencing domestic abuse. Good progress has been made in developing a workforce strategy and offering access to high quality training. However, the strategy does not as yet reflect the changing ethnicity of York's communities.
15. Children's social care services have been effectively reorganised to improve continuity of social work support as children progress through the system. Front-line capacity within children's social care has been strengthened and this has supported well an effective children's advice and assessment service. Children at risk of serious harm are promptly identified and enquiries are thoroughly undertaken. The overall quality of assessments is good. Staff across all agencies receives good support.
16. Child in need and child protection planning contributes to improved outcomes for children and young people but practice is not yet fully consistent. In particular, some written plans are underdeveloped. The records of multi-agency meetings to review plans do not always reflect discussions that have been held. Quality assurance, including the use of regular case audits within children's social care, is effective.
17. The council and its partners have a good understanding of any shortfalls in practice and in the vast majority of instances have implemented plans to address these. The council is aware that the quality of elected members' engagement in the child protection agenda, including their involvement in scrutiny, is an area for development. Supervision within social care has been strengthened. However, in relation to safe



recruitment risk assessments, in respect of a small number of local authority employees do not meet the standards contained in the council's policy.

## **Capacity for improvement**

## **Grade 1 (outstanding)**

18. The capacity for improvement is outstanding. The good outcomes achieved in relation to performance against national indicators and planning for individual children, together with very high levels of critical self awareness across the partnership and a strong track record of improvement, result in an excellent capacity for further improvement.
19. Children's views are keenly sought and inform strategic planning and service development very well. Children, young people and their parents seen by inspectors, along with those completing the council's surveys all felt safe and were highly appreciative of the collective efforts of all agencies to improve their lives.
20. Over a number of years very ambitious leaders have created and sustained excellent partnerships at all levels so that there is a high degree of shared ownership of York's vulnerable children. This is equally applicable to the YorOK Children's Trust and the CYSCB. Consequently quality of provision is good and safeguarding judgements across inspected provision are all good or better.
21. The council has an excellent track record of identifying areas for improvement and using the expertise of all partners to tackle these. There are numerous examples of the council and partners collectively committing the necessary resources to ensure and successfully sustain change with evidence that this has improved outcomes for children and young people. Thus numbers of young people not in education, employment or training are low and focused effort is improving engagement of young people with a learning disability. The relatively recent innovative children's advice and assessment service has significantly increased the numbers of vulnerable children receiving support packages and has appropriately reduced referrals to children's social care which has released capacity to undertake more in-depth assessments. This is a very significant contribution to ensuring that the safeguarding and protection needs of all children are recognised and responded to effectively. The CYSCB rigorously responded to the learning emerging from serious case reviews through an excellent thematic review of neglect which has identified crucial areas where local practice will be strengthened.
22. Very robust action has been taken to respond to the findings from external inspection. The two areas for development arising from the last unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment have been addressed well. The council commissioned a peer review during 2011. All the findings from this have been turned into a detailed action plan and

inspectors were able to identify that this work had produced further improvements in a range of areas. The council and partners are not in any way complacent and are fully aware of those areas in which further progress is needed, such as offering children and young people a stronger voice in child protection planning and increasing their involvement with the CYSCB.

## **Areas for improvement**

23. In order to improve the quality of provision and services for safeguarding children and young people in the City of York, the local authority and its partners should take the following action.

### **Immediately:**

- review risk assessments for children's services staff employed for longer than three years to ensure that these have been completed and are recorded on staff files
- ensure that social workers who are suitably qualified and experienced in child care work are consistently available to deal with emergencies arising out of hours and at weekends.

### **Within three months:**

- accelerate progress to ensure that all child in need and child protection plans consistently identify desired outcomes, clear actions and timescales together with the contingency arrangements in place should the desired outcomes not be achieved
- review scrutiny arrangements within the council to ensure that they include a clear and regular focus on safeguarding and child protection management and practice.

### **Within six months:**

- implement systems to ensure that outcomes for children subject to early intervention, child in need and child protection plans are collated and aggregated so that the factors which contribute to successful outcomes are known and fully understood.

## Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people

### Children and young people are safe and feel safe

#### Grade 2 (good)

24. Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people are good. The council effectively meets its statutory responsibilities for the management and delivery of safeguarding services. Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them to stay safe is judged as good or better in Ofsted inspections across all providers, including children's centres, fostering, adoption and youth offending services.
25. The very large majority of children and young people who completed the council's 'Stand up for Us' survey in 2011 said that they felt safe at school. A similar proportion completing the latest 'Tell Us' survey also felt very or quite safe in their local area. Effective action is taken to monitor and deal with instances of bullying in York's schools, including racist and cyber bullying. The 'Stand up for Us' survey indicates that once reported bullying stopped for almost all the children and young people who said they were bullied on a daily basis.
26. Children and young people seen during the inspection were all very positive about the quality of help and support they received. They thought that staff across agencies listened carefully and that their views and feelings were considered well and made a difference when decisions were made. Children and young people have access to a well established statutory complaints procedure and all are offered an advocate to assist them in making representations. Complaints are suitably monitored and themes arising from complaints are identified to support improvements in practice.
27. A good range of provision provides additional support for those children who are potentially vulnerable or at risk and those who are in danger of becoming disengaged from education. This includes a highly valued mentoring scheme which is particularly effective where children and young people are reluctant to engage with services. The Travellers education service has worked well to support young Travellers receiving elective home education and to support young people not in education, employment and training (NEET). Between 2005 and 2011 the overall proportion of 16 year olds that were NEET reduced from 80% to zero.
28. Robust action by children's social care to investigate risk of harm through timely assessment and case planning also ensures that children feel safe and are safe. Out of hours arrangements are provided through a shared service with North Yorkshire County Council and are satisfactory. Communication between day time services is appropriate and in cases

seen during the inspection information was appropriately shared. However, social workers experienced in child protection are not always available to respond to emergencies and the service is currently being reviewed.

29. Multi-agency arrangements to identify and meet the needs of children missing from home, education or care are good. The police rigorously investigate reports of missing children. Information is monitored to identify patterns and trends and known addresses where children may be harboured. Timely 'safe and well' visits are undertaken on their return and children's needs are assessed to determine if additional support is required.
30. Current processes to ensure that safe recruitment practices meet statutory requirements are satisfactory. Each personnel file reviewed during the inspection contained evidence of a police check on appointment. However, there was no evidence of completion of a risk assessment in relation to one long-standing member of staff.
31. The role and function of the local authority designated officer (LADO) in dealing with complaints made against staff working with children is well embedded and effective. Allegations are rigorously and swiftly followed up any learning points arising from these are incorporated into multi-agency training courses. The council effectively promotes the importance of prevention through safe recruitment and safe care training.

### **Quality of provision**

### **Grade 2 (good)**

32. The quality of provision is good. The Early Intervention Partnership is enabling strong strategic and operational cohesion. Each service understands what others have to offer and families and, as a result of clear protocols for information sharing and referral, individuals are quickly directed to the agencies that are most likely to be able to help them. The YorOK and the Family Information Service websites provide good quality information for workers, families and children.
33. Individual early intervention programmes are monitored rigorously. Among the examples of successful practice seen is the strong collaboration between Catalyst (Family Intervention Project) and other agencies in supporting troubled families. Another is the use of the RONI (Risk of NEET Indicator) to ensure a shared focus on increasing the number of young people who progress to education, employment or training.
34. Services work closely together to tackle potential problems that are common across the authority. Notable examples of such work include the recently developed 'Minding the Baby' and 'Building Family Bridges' programmes that are designed to support young fathers as well as mothers and to help separated couples to take a shared responsibility for the upbringing of their children. Another is the close collaboration between

schools, the police and health services in tackling all forms of bullying. The impact of this is regularly reviewed through research conducted in association with York St John University.

35. Multi-agency early support for vulnerable children, young people and their families is coordinated through the common assessment framework (CAF) process which is well understood. All agencies are actively engaged in initiating and overseeing the services provided. Most of the CAF assessments and plans reviewed during the inspection included appropriate analysis, identified relevant sources of support and had led to improved outcomes. However, parents' and children's views are not consistently recorded. Where concerns for children's safety arose while they were receiving this support these were quickly referred to children's social care. Parents who met with inspectors were very positive about the help that they had received and the improvements that had been made to their own and their children's lives.
36. Effective partnership working between key agencies has led to the development of the innovative advice and assessment service which responds to concerns about a child or young person, whatever their level of vulnerability or need and supports other agencies to initiate a CAF assessment if necessary. These activities are recorded using the electronic E-Trak system which builds a full picture of the preventative work undertaken with individual children and young people.
37. The large majority of referrals to the children's advice and assessment service are appropriate and timely. Staff across all agencies reported that as a result of readily available advice from the service they felt more confident to carry out their safeguarding responsibilities. All referrals at the boundary of early help and specialist social care involvement are reviewed in a daily meeting which includes representatives from social care, health, the police and the youth offending team. Multi-agency decision-making in those cases viewed during the inspection was based on a thorough appraisal of risks and was clearly recorded. The impact of this service has been a significant increase in the number of CAFs undertaken from 194 in 2009 to 500 at the end of 2011. Specialist resources have been more precisely targeted, leading appropriately to fewer referrals to children's social care and fewer initial assessments. This has released resources to undertake more in-depth core assessments which increased from 147 to 224 during 2011-12.
38. Effective management in the children's advice and assessment teams ensures that social work assessments are allocated promptly. The majority of initial and core assessments seen during the inspection were of a good quality. Risks and protective factors were clearly identified and the views of staff from other agencies were effectively included. Children are routinely seen during assessments and their views are clearly evidenced but it is not always clear if reports are shared with children and their



parents. Needs in relation to racial, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds are appropriately considered.

39. Child protection enquiries are managed well. They are allocated promptly to qualified and experienced social workers. Strategy discussions always include the police and children's social care and often benefit from wider agency involvement. Decisions reached during these meetings are appropriately recorded. Child protection enquiries are effectively undertaken with children routinely seen alone. Decision-making at the conclusion of enquiries is robust and where there is evidence of significant harm timely initial child protection conferences are held.
40. Work with children in need, including those with disabilities, who are assessed as requiring further support is managed effectively by social workers or family support workers who are supervised by experienced practice managers. Children are regularly seen and direct work is undertaken according to need. Other agencies are actively involved in visiting families and provide a good range of support. Information is appropriately shared on a day to day basis and, in most instances, through 'child in need' meetings.
41. Multi-agency child protection planning is effective. Information sharing at well attended initial and review child protection conferences is robust. Reports and assessments prepared for these meetings are of sound quality. Parents receive good support to participate and their views are clearly understood and recorded. However, the voice of the child or young person is not always clearly reflected and this is recognised as an area for improvement. All agencies are actively engaged in implementing child protection plans and most plans progress well through regularly held and well attended core groups. Outcomes for children improve as a result of this work. Child protection planning is appropriately overseen by experienced independent reviewing officers (IROs) who are able to demonstrate that plans are not discontinued until risks have been suitably reduced. Conference decisions are distributed to partner agencies within one working day. However, there are delays in distributing the full records and this has been suitably tackled through the recruitment of an additional IRO.
42. The quality of recording is adequate or better. A small proportion is not produced in a timely manner and some delays in the recording of completed work in the children's social care teams are due to competing work pressures. Summaries of work with children in need are not available on all children's case records. Outline written protection plans are routinely agreed at initial child protection conferences. However, these are not consistently translated into outcome focused plans that identify clearly the required actions, timescales and contingency arrangements should the plan not be successful. Progress against plans is regularly reviewed at core group meetings but this activity is not consistently reflected in the

recording and this means that the child's record contains limited information about the impact the plan is having on reducing risk.

43. Management oversight is evident on most case files and decisions made in supervision are regularly recorded on children's files. In some instances the basis on which the decision has been made is not recorded. When children are subject to court proceedings, reports are of a good standard and written care plans are comprehensive.
44. Case transfer arrangements within children's social care are known and well understood. Outcomes of assessment are promptly passed through to the longer-term teams to ensure that children continue to receive an appropriate level of service to meet their identified need.

### **The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe** **Grade 2 (good)**

45. The contribution of health agencies is good. Health partners demonstrate compliance with statutory guidance. Robust safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures are in place in commissioning and provider trusts. Health staff at all levels seen during the inspection demonstrated a clear understanding of their safeguarding and child protection responsibilities.
46. All staff have received basic child protection training. Rolling programmes of higher levels of child protection training are in place and are suitably monitored by the safeguarding children teams. All staff have access to individual child protection supervision. Community and key groups of staff in acute services, such as those working in the emergency and midwifery departments, receive formal reflective group supervision, which staff reported as working very well. This system is being introduced for the remainder of acute hospital staff whose work brings them into contact with children and young people.
47. Advice and support provided to health staff, including primary care, from designated and named professionals in both commissioning and provider trusts is strong and very well regarded. Designated and named professionals regularly attend the CYSCB. The safeguarding teams within the two trusts are active in the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) process.
48. The engagement of GPs in safeguarding arrangements is good and improving. All GPs have enhanced criminal record bureau checks and have received basic training with at least one GP in each practice having received further child protection training in line with professional guidelines. Some GPs attend child protection conferences and guidance is in place to ensure that reports to conferences contain the necessary

information and are consistent. Other primary care staff are trained to minimum requirements.

49. Robust safeguarding processes are in place in the emergency department at York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust including good quality arrangements to recognise, assess and refer children who may be at risk of abuse. The recording of children's individual attendances is consistently completed. Procedures to ensure parental consent to treatment are appropriate. Health staff demonstrated a good awareness of potential risk indicators. The electronic system alerts staff to those children on a child protection plan and is being developed to include looked after children. Referral pathways are in place to identify safeguarding risks such as domestic violence and substance misuse. The safeguarding children team make daily visits to the emergency department to discuss any issues or concerns in respect of children's welfare or safety that may require further action. Some nursing staff in the department are dual trained for both children and adults but there are insufficient numbers to ensure children's specialists are available on each shift.
50. The emergency department has adequate facilities to treat children and young people including a separate waiting area near to the main reception. There is suitable access to play equipment and play specialists based in paediatrics. Plans to improve the provision are about to be implemented with the addition of children's treatment bays in the urgent care centre/walk-in centre.
51. York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has a special care baby unit which is well regarded by parents. Two neonatal outreach nurses visit families at home to provide medical advice and emotional support; good joint working with health visitors is reported. Recommendations following a recent serious case review in respect of staff awareness of risks to babies have been implemented.
52. The Healthy Child Programme is delivered to good effect with improved outcomes for children and young people. Participation in the 'Be a Star' campaign has increased breastfeeding initiation rates in York which are above the regional average. York has achieved 95% coverage of the primary vaccination course by a child's first birthday, which is better than the national average and the average for similar areas. By the age of five, the percentage of children who have received their second dose of the measles, mumps and rubella immunisation is higher than the national average.
53. Health visitors work well with community nurses, nursery nurses and clinic nursing staff to deliver a good range of services to children under the age of five years. Positive feedback has been received from parents along with areas for improvement which the team has acted upon. School nurses provide an effective service to all mainstream schools. Staff numbers in

the school and health visiting teams are sufficient to meet the demands of core and targeted work. Workloads are subject to appropriate management oversight and this is reported by staff as working well.

54. A range of effective sexual health services together with a robust teenage pregnancy strategy have resulted in a significant reduction in under-18 conceptions by 21.7% between 1998 and 2009 which is better than the national average. Sex and relationship education is provided in all schools and as a result of involving parents it has now been adapted for children with disabilities. Effective sexual health services are provided by YorSexual Health which has received the 'You're Welcome' accreditation in February 2011 which is given in recognition of young people's involvement in planning and evaluation. There is very good access for young people to contraception advice and support through the Castlegate Centre, which is held in high regard by young people, and the nurse-led young people's sexual health outreach team. However, although the percentage of young people screened for Chlamydia has improved, it remains below the national average and the work to improve uptake continues.
55. Support for young people who misuse substances is good. The rate of young people under 18 years who were admitted to hospital because they have a condition wholly related to alcohol is similar to the England average. Parents with significant drug and alcohol problems who have children on child protection plans or whose children are in care are effectively supported by the city's drugs and alcohol action team (DAAT). The service is the second most improved DAAT area nationally in relation to adults receiving treatment for opiate use. Young people are supported very well through the Castlegate Centre and through First Base, the young people's drug and alcohol treatment service.
56. Children and young people in York have access to, and benefit from, an exceptional CAMHS that delivers a comprehensive range of high quality services including those for eating disorders, learning difficulties, bereavement and the in-patient facility at Lime Trees. York has a very effective primary mental health team who are able to provide a service to approximately 75% of referrals, which demonstrates an effective use of resources as more specialist CAMHS support can be better directed to more complex work. They are involved in the targeted mental health in schools scheme (TaMHS) which is led by the Educational Psychology Service. Emotional literacy support assistants have good links with schools to ensure that support is swiftly provided and the scheme has demonstrated positive outcomes for targeted vulnerable pupils. Children and young people also benefit from the strong national CAMHS for children and young people who are deaf which is based in York. Staff reported that they exceed performance targets for access to this service.
57. A good range of health services for children and young people with disabilities, including the child development centre, specialist therapy staff

and a valued portage service is held in high regard by parents seen during the inspection. Children with life limiting illnesses have access to a palliative care service that is effectively supported by CAMHS. The two special schools are suitably supported by trained nurses and health care assistants. The co-location of health staff in children's centres enables good communication with school and social care staff. Multi-agency transition to support the move to adult services are very focused on children's needs and include a health passport to assist young people to take control of their health needs. Health professionals are very well integrated into the service.

58. Arrangements for children and young people who have been subject to sexual assault are in place and are excellent. The Acorn Unit is a purpose built sexual assault referral centre that complies with the standards for paediatric forensic medical services. Young people who are looked after were involved in the development of the service and the choice of name.

### **Ambition and prioritisation**

### **Grade 2 (good)**

59. Ambition and prioritisation are good. The well established YorOK Children's Trust has worked very effectively to break down barriers between agencies. Consequently integrated working is well embedded both strategically and operationally. Partners demonstrate a strong shared responsibility for the welfare of all children and young people. The trust board engenders a climate of self critical reflection which is sharply focused on improvement and this approach is also reflected well in the work of the strategic planning groups that report to it. Relationships between the trust and the CYSCB are strong; the independent Chair of the safeguarding board provides effective external challenge.
60. Partners' ambitions for all children are clearly expressed in a strong children and young people's plan (CYPP) and by senior managers across all agencies. The outcome of this ambition is seen in the comments made by children and young people during the inspection who, without exception, highly valued the levels of care and support they receive to make positive progress in their lives.
61. Very child-centred senior leaders provide strong and focused leadership across key agencies. The Director of Children's Services (DCS), along with the Chief Executive of the council drive forward key priorities for the development of early intervention, including the involvement of schools in supporting vulnerable children and young people. Current ambitions form a solid basis on which to develop new arrangements. Plans to implement the new strategic frameworks across health and social care are well advanced and the DCS is a member of the new Clinical Commissioning Group. Children's issues are included in the joint strategic needs assessment. However, it is recognised that there is a need to more explicitly incorporate safeguarding related matters. The needs of all children are championed by a committed and well informed lead member.



Elected members receive regular safeguarding briefings and training. However, the need to strengthen the active engagement of a wider group of members in safeguarding issues is acknowledged by the council.

62. Local priorities are clear, well understood by front-line staff and their impact is examined well. Senior managers collectively plan and manage change effectively. For example, early intervention is a key shared local priority that has been carefully executed to ensure that an increasing number of children who need additional help are identified and supported. The extensively evaluated social care transformation strategy is well owned across key partners. Open and reflective strategic relationships generally lead to problems being identified at an early stage and collective action being taken to address them. Senior managers in children's social care have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development and acknowledge that further work is needed to fully embed consistently high quality work in some areas of practice.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 2 (good)**

63. Leadership and management are good. Effective planning has ensured that there are sufficient numbers of qualified and experienced social workers and other staff to deliver services. Workloads in children's social care are generally reasonable and a formal management system enables pressures to be suitably monitored. Additional social workers have been appointed so that case loads in the children's advice and assessment service have significantly reduced; this was an area for development at the last unannounced inspection. All children subject to child protection plans are allocated to qualified social workers. Vacancy rates for most health posts are in line with national averages.
64. The 2009-12 workforce strategy is an effective response to a recommendation from the joint area review of 2008. Local priorities in respect of integrated working have been clearly progressed. For example, the commitment to provide good quality learning is reflected in the specialist foundation degree and the 'top up' degree for the children's workforce, including staff from voluntary and community sector agencies, which are delivered in partnership with York St John University. Shared children's induction standards which provide a framework for newly appointed staff across partner agencies to understand their roles are in place, although the use and impact of these has not been evaluated. There is recognition that the children's workforce and plan does not reflect the city's current diversity. The council has produced a new corporate strategy which tackles these issues but making the necessary changes is at an early stage of development.
65. Collectively the CYSCB and the council have developed a good range of well targeted training that reflects the views of front-line staff about their needs as well as strategic priorities. Learning opportunities, including the 'No Wrong Doors' annual event for the children's workforce, are very well

regarded by staff across all sectors. Partners make their training available to staff from other agencies. Gaps in training provision are responded to effectively; for example, the training of lead practitioners in peer supervision methods. However, it is recognised that further progress needs to be made to measure the impact of learning on the quality of practice.

66. Joint commissioning through the integrated commissioning group is excellent and well embedded. It reflects the high quality of partnership working and the robust processes that characterise the strategic approach taken in the city. Needs are very clearly identified and include the views of children and young people by means of a strong engagement strategy with them.
67. Effective joint commissioning has led to a range of positive outcomes for children. The re-commissioning of drug and alcohol treatment services has contributed effectively to protecting children as parents have significantly increased access to drug rehabilitation and their children benefit from direct work to meet their needs. Resources were effectively redirected from the attendance-focused education welfare service into the children's advice and assessment service. The savings made from reducing the number of external placements have been used to strengthen the outcome-based commissioning of early intervention provision. Safeguarding arrangements within this provision are well monitored and the processes are well regarded by the voluntary and community sector as thorough and fair. However, funding has been provided on a year-on-year basis which makes it difficult for providers to forward plan.
68. Agencies also take prompt corrective action through joint commissioning when they collectively identify weaknesses or gaps in resources. For example, although there is a low number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), agencies, in partnership with further education colleges, have developed a number of flexible packages to support young people to maintain their attendance. As a result there is a 51% increase in participants taking entry level courses thus reducing their longer term vulnerability. Agencies also responded well to findings from a recent peer review, and strengthened the holistic support for homeless young people by developing the 'Place of Change' residential facility for homeless 16/19 year olds that also supports their re-engagement in education.
69. Resources are managed very well. Compared to other unitary authorities York receives a low level of national funding. Key services have been protected well through the council's budget management process. The recently initiated independent and non political Fairness Commission recommended that social care services for the most vulnerable were protected and this was accepted by elected members. Although savings

have been made across children's services, the council has not reduced expenditure for children's social care in 2012-14.

70. Very strong strategic partnership working and an intelligent use of grant funding has created efficiency savings while improving the quality of provision. For example, the recent re-commissioning of transport contracts produced a saving of £200,000 and a higher quality service with all drivers completing safeguarding training. At a time of national and local budget reductions financial resources have been used very effectively to maintain services such as Catalyst, and children's centre provision for vulnerable children. Resources are redirected from areas where good progress has been made, such as in reducing obesity, to sustain other provision and assets are efficiently used, for example through the co-location of services. Very good multi-agency action to review provision has led to investment in redesigned and highly valued services such as the integrated transitions service and the Castlegate Centre which provides support to 16-18 year olds. Schools, through the schools partnership, have contributed significant resources to support work with vulnerable children.
71. Children's views inform service improvement well. Their priorities are clearly reflected in the CYPP. The youth council's priority to de-stigmatise free school meals is well supported by the YorOK Children's Trust. Parents of disabled children are particularly well engaged in service planning, delivery and training through the parents' forum CANDI (Children AND Inclusion). Feedback from children and their parents is collected by some services, for example by CAMHS and TaMHS and the children's advice and assessment service has improved the process for informing families of what they should expect from an assessment as a result of their feedback. However, partners recognise that further work is needed to systematically collect, analyse and use feedback as the basis for improved service delivery.

## **Performance management and quality assurance**

### **Grade 2 (good)**

72. Performance management and quality assurance processes for safeguarding are good. There is a strong emphasis on using the findings to improve service delivery and front-line practice.
73. Clear and challenging targets are set in relation to performance against national indicators. Progress in service development is systematically monitored by the YorOK Children's Trust and senior managers and has led to significant improvements. For example, information from lead practitioners about the impact of common assessment processes has been periodically collected and the most recent review shows that outcomes for individual children are improving. However, the council and partners recognise the need to identify qualitative indicators to record and

aggregate outcomes across groups of children so that the factors contributing to successful practice may be better understood.

74. The CYSCB maintains a strong focus on monitoring safeguarding performance. The board receives annual reports on specific aspects of the council's and partner agencies' activities including private fostering, and missing children arrangements. Audits conducted in relation to compliance with safeguarding duties across partner agencies were last undertaken during 2008-9 and the board is in the process of repeating these audits.
75. Young people make an important contribution to quality assurance through the young inspectors programme. Using observations, interviews and mystery shopping they have evaluated the quality of provision from the young person's perspective. Agencies, such as Relate, report that the recommendations arising from these visits are invaluable. Young inspectors also identify that their self confidence has increased by taking part in this programme.
76. Scrutiny arrangements undertaken by elected members are adequate. This was identified as an area for improvement following the joint area review and a more recent peer review found it to be still underdeveloped. The scope of the scrutiny function is wide and includes cultural services as well as children and education. Members are updated in relation to safeguarding performance. However, it is recognised that there is a need to further clarify the role of the group and to accelerate the development of priorities and plans.
77. Performance management is well embedded within children's social care including through the use of external challenge. Service plans are robust and reflect well areas for improvement emerging from inspection and internal and external audit and they are well monitored and evaluated. Plans are very well advanced to provide up to date individual performance information to assist front-line social workers in managing their workloads and targets.
78. A monthly cycle of robust case file audits undertaken by service managers is driving improvements in social work practice, for example in recently improving the quality of core group meetings. Where the audits identify practice shortfalls, effective action is taken to address these. However, in the case file audits undertaken prior to this inspection not all the shortfalls in practice were fully identified by auditors.
79. Staff across all key agencies receive regular supervision. Within children's social care decisions are routinely signed off by managers; this was an area for improvement at the last unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment. Supervision arrangements in children's social care have been robustly reviewed and the positive impact of this is now evident. Supervision is subject to annual audit, the latest of which found that most staff receive regular case supervision and have access to

management support when needed. This was confirmed by this inspection where front-line staff reported that they highly valued the availability and visibility of managers, including senior managers, and that they receive good quality reflective supervision. However, this level of support was not consistently reflected in the recording of supervision in the files reviewed.

## **Partnership working**

## **Grade 1 (outstanding)**

80. Partnership working is outstanding. Effective leaders across all agencies have a clear shared strategic vision. They use collective resources well through very effective joint commissioning of provision. Competent managers have developed clear policies and protocols to support joint working over a wide range of areas. The impact of this is reflected in strongly cohesive service provision and a very strong commitment by staff to multi-agency working. Inspectors found that front-line staff share a very good understanding of each other's services and effectively, and sometimes very imaginatively, undertake a range of successful joint interventions as a result.
81. There are numerous examples of very effective partnership working described in this report. Schools are very successfully engaged in providing support to vulnerable children and those in need of protection. The schools partnership funded the post of safeguarding officer and this has strengthened safer recruitment, responses to allegations against staff and safeguarding training. The pupil premium is effectively used and monitored to extend children and young people's experiences. Young people seen during the inspection highly appreciated the enrichment opportunity provided by the youth services' use of outdoor learning through activities such as wild deer tracking, bush craft and survival skills. The police are particularly well involved in partnership working both strategically and operationally, including in relation to sexual exploitation. Operation Hindsight, a partnership between the police and schools, is well focused on issues of extremism and involves parents well.
82. Local responses to domestic abuse exemplify the very good partnership working that exists in the city. A multi-agency programme supported and overseen by the CYSCB has strengthened provision well. Robust awareness raising, training and the consolidation of assessment and risk management across agencies have resulted in increased reporting rates and a significant fall in repeat incidents from 33% in 2009-10 to an average of 22% in the first seven months of 2011. MARAC arrangements work well to identify high risk cases. Multi-agency service provision has been considerably expanded and innovative work is undertaken including with children and young people and with male victims of abuse. Families affected by domestic violence are offered support to safely rebuild relationships. Advocacy services currently support 49 children aged between five and 13 and evaluation shows that they feel safer as a result of the support. Perpetrators are challenged to change their violent



behaviour and have appropriate access to emergency accommodation through the 'Making Safe' project.

83. Good use is made of the partnership with the voluntary and independent sectors. This is reflected in the current restructuring of the youth service. The authority's own resources are being increasingly targeted on vulnerable children. However, the use of additional resources from partner agencies is ensuring that the universal offer is not eroded as a result.
84. The strategic co-location of partner agencies makes an important contribution to joint working. Social work teams are co-located in children's centres on school sites, alongside health visiting staff. Specialist police officers, education welfare staff and the specialist child protection nurse are well integrated into the work of the advice and assessment service. Inspectors observed a culture of respect operating among staff and managers at all levels across all agencies.
85. This culture of respect is also reflected in the work of the highly effective CYSCB. The board discharges its statutory duties well and provides effective leadership, support and challenge. Partner agencies are highly committed to the work of the board and its sub-groups. Any variation in attendance by agencies is swiftly addressed. The voluntary sector is well represented and exerts effective influence. Two lay members have also been appointed. The thematic review of neglect is an example of the partnership's collaborative and robust approach where complexities are firmly and effectively tackled. It is based on a thorough examination of national research and local practice through case audit and testing the thresholds for responding to neglect.
86. The board retains an effective oversight to monitor developing practice in high risk areas of work. The LADO is responsible for overseeing strategy meetings that consider the needs of children and young people who have been or are at risk of being harmed by other children. Therapeutic needs of child perpetrators are also identified and strategies such as placement changes and exclusion zones are put in place.
87. The work of the CYSCB and its key priorities are effectively communicated and as a result the board's priorities are understood and implemented across the partnership. The lessons from serious case reviews have been very effectively disseminated through a series of briefings and presentations. Front-line staff identify with the work of the CYSCB and some staff were able to explain to inspectors how findings from serious case reviews have been used to improve their practice.
88. Child death overview arrangements are suitably managed through the North Yorkshire and York panel with York well represented on the panel. The annual report is presented to the CYSCB and the findings are analysed to inform practice and interventions. For example, a 'safe

sleeping' campaign to raise awareness of the risks involved was launched following the panel's response to local child deaths.

## Services for looked after children

### Overall effectiveness

### Grade 2 (good)

89. The overall effectiveness of services for looked after children is good. Outcomes for looked after children are good across all areas. Effective care planning and very good multi-agency working benefits children and young people who progress well. All children and young people spoken to reported a consistently high level of satisfaction with their placements. They felt very well cared for by committed and loving foster carers or very well supported in their move to independence. All felt safe in their placements and in the community. Parents seen during the inspection strongly appreciated the support they and their children received.
90. Outcomes from regulatory inspection of adoption, fostering and children's homes are good or better. Performance against national indicators is better than the national average in most instances. The adoption service has delivered some of the best performance in England in 2010-2011 and 2011-2012. Where performance is below what the local authority considers desirable, for example in relation to placement stability, good action is taken to understand the issues and robustly respond.
91. Looked after children and young people's need are prioritised effectively in the children and young people's plan (CYPP) and in the work of the YorOK Children's Trust. Local leaders have an intelligent and in depth understanding of reasons children and young people become and remain looked after and this is reflected in a well articulated plan to reduce numbers safely. The looked after children strategy is an excellent reflection of children and young people's views and priorities and the council's and its partners' ambitions for them.
92. The quality of care planning is good. Front-line staff at all levels work well together to support children and young people in the high number of local foster placements. Sufficient skilled and committed staff from all agencies offer children regular and sensitive support, although it is acknowledged that the ethnicity of the workforce does not reflect the make-up of local communities. Health agencies, including in particular CAMHS and the virtual school are very well involved in sustaining fragile placements. Multi-agency commissioning of the small number of external placements is very good. A particularly positive feature of multi-agency practice is the attention given to offering 'second chances' which is a reflection of what good parents offer their own children.
93. Local resources are used well to make significant improvements in the quality of provision. For example, to enable young adults to live with their foster carers after the age of 18. Resources have been very effectively used so that a significant number of children on the edge of care, including children with severe and challenging disabilities, have been

successfully diverted from becoming looked after. Numbers of children or young people placed externally or living more than 20 miles from the city are very low and consequently individual placement costs have reduced over the last three years.

94. There remain some challenges to improve and sustain aspects of performance and management and senior managers are very aware of these. The involvement of a wider group of elected members in corporate parenting and scrutiny requires strengthening and the impact of this demonstrated. The number of completed personal educational plans (PEPS) is lower than the authority would wish and their quality is variable. Although staff report that they receive regular supervision, the quality of supervision provided for staff within the fostering and adoption service and children's homes has not been audited. Recent improvements have been made to performance against national indicators in respect of timeliness of annual health assessments and the review of children's cases. However, these improvements need to be further sustained.

## **Capacity for improvement**

## **Grade 1 (outstanding)**

95. Capacity for improvement is outstanding. Performance against the large majority of national indicators is good and in the case of adoption is outstanding. Planning for individual children is effective; children, young people and parents seen during the inspection strongly appreciated the care and support they received. Children and young people only become looked after when this is the option most likely to meet their needs. Safeguarding of looked after children is good and the CYSCB takes an active interest in their welfare and protection. The local authority and its partners have a robust track record of improvement together with the leadership, ambition and resources to drive forward good services. Taken together all these factors result in an excellent capacity for further improvement.
96. Very child-centred senior managers set high aspirations for looked after children and young people. Targets are focused on improving already good performance, such as in relation to school attendance and educational achievement. The council has effectively maintained high quality services in several key areas of provision such as the adoption and fostering services, the pathway service for care leavers and the CAMHS for looked after children. The local authority and its key partners have an excellent record of achieving timely permanent placements, including through adoption and special guardianship. Multi-agency partnership working is excellent and partners have worked very well together to strengthen provision including responses to children and young people missing from care. Young people are listened to very well during this process and their voice is strongly reflected in an excellent strategy which sets correct and ambitious priorities for the next three years.

97. Local resources are collectively used very well in commissioning arrangements. Where additional resources are demonstrated as necessary there is strong political support to provide these. Very robust action has been taken to respond to the findings from external inspections which are translated into appropriately detailed action plans. For example, the peer review's recommendations have been or are in the process of being effectively implemented.

### **Areas for improvement**

98. In order to improve the quality of provision and services for looked after children and young people in City of York, the local authority and its partners should take the following action.

#### **Immediately:**

- ensure that every looked after child has an up to date personal education plan (PEP) of high quality and that reviews of these plans are timed so that every young person is able to attend.

#### **Within three months:**

- bring together information about the educational progress of individual looked after children and young people that is held separately, to give a clear aggregated picture of trends and priorities and to better understand what needs to be achieved to further improve their achievement
- ensure that the quality of supervision for staff working in the adoption and fostering services and children's homes is included in the local authority's audit arrangements
- York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust should ensure that the recent improvements in the timeliness of initial and review health assessments are sustained
- NHS North Yorkshire and York should ensure that arrangements are in place to provide timely health assessments for looked after children and young people who live in external placements or whose placement address is outside of the city boundary.

## **How good are outcomes for looked after children and care leavers?**

### **Being healthy**

### **Grade 2 (good)**

99. Health outcomes for looked after children are good. The proportion of children with up to date immunisations and having a dental check is well above the England average and the average for similar areas. Effective



leadership by the designated doctor and designated nurse in partnership with children's social care has led to sizeable improvements in the proportion of looked after children receiving their annual assessment, which was significantly below the national average in the previous year. Robust new processes have improved timely notification of children becoming looked after and the capacity of clinics has been increased to include school holiday periods. Local data for 2012-13 shows that health assessments are now delivered within required timescales. However, this early progress is yet to be sustained.

100. Local audit data shows the quality of health assessments is good; this was also the case for health assessments reviewed during this inspection. The purpose-built Acorn Unit provides exceptional facilities for the completion of initial health needs assessments. In order to reduce duplication, when children are medically examined due to concerns about neglect or abuse, the opportunity is taken to include information that would inform a looked after initial health needs assessment. This is good practice.
101. Quality monitoring systems of health assessments for looked after children placed out of the city have been strengthened. However, these are not systematically completed in a timely way by the relevant health agency. This issue has been suitably raised with the regional commissioning network in order that this issue can be resolved by health organisations within the region.
102. The specialist CAMHS team for looked after children and care leavers provides an outstanding service. Very good support is provided to children and their foster carers that enables local placements to be sustained and children's behaviour to be confident and socially acceptable. Foster carers and social workers can refer children directly into the service and there are no waiting lists for support. Foster carers highly value the support they receive. Looked after children with disabilities benefit well from the joint clinic arrangements between clinicians from CAMHS and paediatricians and from the highly regarded FIRST (Family Intervention Rapid Service Team) programme. FIRST has provided intensive support to a small number of families of severely disabled children whose behaviour is challenging and young people have been supported to remain with their families and have been diverted from out of home placements. The CAMHS is well integrated into strategic planning and placement monitoring arrangements.
103. Targeted health promotion services work well. All young people are screened for substance misuse and a pathway is in place to ensure prompt access. All looked after children and young people have access to sex and relationship education in schools and there are good links with the young people's sexual health outreach team which provides very helpful support to young people. Therapeutic support is provided through the NSPCC to looked after children who have been sexually abused and their carers; as

a result young people's emotional well-being has improved and they perform better at school.

104. It is recognised that the health care provision for care leavers is inconsistent. Young people over the age of 16 all have access to their GP. However, over and above this, care leavers are offered annual health assessments only if they remain in education. This gap has been recognised and has been tackled through new commissioning arrangements that have just come into place.
105. There are very few children living in the city who have not been placed by the City of York as there are no independent foster care agencies or children's homes within the local authority boundary. Those children who have been placed with carers from other local authorities living in the city have appropriate access to the full range of health care services.

### **Staying safe**

### **Grade 2 (good)**

106. The arrangements to safeguard looked after children and young people are good. Those spoken to during the inspection showed a very high level of satisfaction with the support they received. They were unstinting in their praise for their foster carers. Social workers and pathway workers were also described very positively. Of the looked after children and young people completing the 'Care4Me' survey carried out for the purpose of this inspection, nearly all thought they were living 'in the right place', were receiving good or very good care and felt safe or very safe where they lived.
107. Work with children and young people on the edge of care is effective. Over the last year good work with vulnerable children has reduced the number of referrals to children's social care and this has released capacity to undertake more in-depth assessments of need. There is a good range of provision. The Catalyst project works with families in serious difficulty and as a result of high quality multi-agency action 40 of the 199 children supported since April 2010 were prevented from becoming looked after. The council and its partners are further developing targeted services such as the 'Minding the Baby' project which works with vulnerable young mothers and their babies. Drug and alcohol services also make an effective contribution.
108. Risk is managed well at the threshold for admission to care through robust management oversight, good cross-agency understanding of thresholds, and effective liaison with the council's legal services. During the inspection all looked after children whose cases were examined were appropriately looked after.
109. A high proportion (80%) of children and young people, including 74% of looked after 15-17 year olds, are provided with good quality care by local foster carers who have high aspirations for them. The children, young

people and care leavers seen during the inspection gave high praise for the quality of the care they received commenting that carers 'made me feel I belonged' and that they received 'loads of support and love'. As one said: 'I wouldn't be where I am today without them'.

110. The local authority has undertaken extensive research into recent patterns of placement stability. The number of children with more than three moves in the last 12 months is well understood and includes very well planned moves to return children home and care leavers progressing towards independence. It also reflects the council's success in achieving timely permanent placements; 82% of the children experiencing placement moves in the last year are in adoptive placements. Contingency plans are in place for every young person should the additional support offered to and by their second placement prove insufficient to enable them to remain in that placement.
111. The recent stability of longer-term placements, although in line with the national average, has reduced and is not at the level to which the council aspires. The council is vigilant and working hard to improve performance. Senior managers understand well the reasons for recent variations, including the number of teenagers in the looked after population and 'late entries' to care. Robust tracking systems are in place. The multi-agency joint agency panel works very well to provide a good range of additional targeted support to prevent unplanned placement endings for those in local foster homes. In the cases reviewed during the inspection no child or young person was subjected to an inappropriate change of placement.
112. Risk is managed well through good systems to ensure that children and young people are protected. All looked after children and young people are allocated to qualified social workers who see them regularly. Local agencies are very actively engaged in providing support. Good quality mentoring is particularly valuable for young people who find it difficult engaging with some professionals. Suitable consideration is given to ensuring that children's cultural and language needs are met when a link is being made. The independent visitors scheme is effective and held in high regard by those who use it. Children are linked to an appropriate adult and through positive relationships are supported in making representations and having their voice heard.
113. Arrangements for monitoring care placements are good. Statutory visits and care plan reviews for looked after children and care leavers are carried out at least in accordance with statutory requirements. Where circumstances indicate, children's plans are reviewed more often. As a result, in those cases seen during the inspection, children and young people made good progress and outcomes such as engagement in education and emotional well-being were improving. The safety and quality of external placements are extensively evaluated before they are used through the advice and expertise of partners represented on the

joint agency panel. The vast majority of those children placed externally are in provision judged good or better by Ofsted.

114. Agencies work well together to prevent looked after children and young people going missing from care. The protocol was revised in August 2011 and foster carers have been appropriately consulted about this work. The police make regular visits to the authority's longer stay children's home and intelligence is shared well in relation to the risks that young people may be exposed to while missing from care.

## Enjoying and achieving

## Grade 2 (good)

115. The impact of services on enabling looked after children and young people to enjoy and achieve is good. Almost two thirds of those placed in local provision or externally are in schools that are good or better and none attends an unsatisfactory school. The authority works hard to minimise disruption to children's education, even when there are several changes in their placements. In admitting pupils, schools give the first priority to looked after children. Figures for 2011 show that the large majority stayed in the same school in the year leading up to their GCSE examinations.
116. In 2010/11, the Key Stage 2 results for looked after children were above the averages for their counterparts in similar authorities and nationally. Over the last two years, the gap between the results for looked after children and those for all children locally and nationally has narrowed. Over the same period, there was a considerable rise in the proportion of children in care who achieved A\* to C grades in five or more GCSE subjects, including English and mathematics. Results in 2011 were significantly higher than for looked after children in similar authorities and across the country. The achievement gap between 16-year-olds who are looked after and all children locally and nationally is narrowing.
117. Last year, the Key Stage 2 English targets for looked after children were exceeded. The same was true at GCSE. The value added to the performance of looked after children, as they progress through school, is higher than the average for such children nationally. Of the random sample of cases examined on the virtual school's database, the majority were making at least satisfactory progress. Officers and schools recognise the need to define clearer targets and timescales for fulfilling their ambition to raise attainment of looked after children and young people.
118. Through regular visits from improvement partners, all schools, including academies, are challenged to raise attainment. Additional resources and help are provided for schools and individuals when progress is lower than expected. The performance of looked after children placed outside the authority is also carefully monitored.
119. The school attendance of looked after children is better than for their counterparts in similar authorities and across the country and the most

recent figures show that it continues to improve. In the last two years, no child in care has been permanently excluded from school. The number of fixed term exclusions has more than halved over the last three years but is still considerably higher than for all children in the authority. The very strong partnership between the authority, schools and a wide range of agencies ensures that children who are at risk of exclusion receive appropriate and timely support. The Danesgate Centre and other projects have had a clear impact in helping children who have become disengaged with education to resume their learning.

120. The proportion of looked after children with an up to date PEP has fluctuated over the last four years. In 2010/11 the figure was 78.8%. The PEPs examined during the inspection did not consistently include full information on educational attainment and action plans did not always give precise details of targets and timescales for their completion. The timing of PEP reviews during the school day means that young people are sometimes reluctant to participate because they do not want to miss lessons or to be identified as being looked after.
121. Looked after children are provided with a wide range of leisure activities. They have free entry to the city's leisure centres and sports clubs and through the restructuring of the youth service they have access to an increasing variety of activities specifically designed for them. The provision made by the authority is further enhanced through close collaboration with the voluntary sector. Those providers who have clear safeguarding and quality assurance systems are allowed to advertise their activities in the 'Shine' magazine which is distributed to all schools. As a result, young people, including those looked after, have the opportunity to experience a wide range of artistic, sporting and cultural activities that help to enrich their lives.

## **Making a positive contribution, including user engagement**

### **Grade 2 (good)**

122. Opportunities for looked after children and young people to make a positive contribution are good. They are helped to present their ideas clearly and succinctly and a memorable aspect of this inspection was the quality of the contributions that they made. They are provided with several means of speaking out on issues that matter to them. These include PEP and care plan reviews, membership of school councils and authority-wide fora. The most recent figures show that 98% of looked after children over the age of four contribute to the reviews of their care plans although, in most cases, this is done indirectly.
123. Appropriate opportunities for looked after children to influence decisions made by the local authority are provided through the children in care council, 'Show Me that I Matter', and the 'I Matter 2' group for 12- to 15-year-olds. Members of both groups liaise with senior officers and elected



members and the children in care council reports directly to the YorOK Children's Trust. The groups made an important contribution to the development of the Pledge. A concerted effort is being made to increase the participation of young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is no formal link between the children in care council and the youth council.

124. The effect of these groups on the shaping of services is reflected in a number of ways. For example, through extensive consultation with young people, parents, carers, GPs and other health care representatives, the children in care council succeeded in bringing about a reduction in the number of formal medical examinations that looked after children have to undergo. They persuaded the Mayor to make the Mansion House available for the care leavers' Christmas party and were responsible for planning a major event which celebrated a very wide range of achievements by looked after children, in order to combat negative images in the press. They have also organised events to celebrate the work of their carers.
125. The 'I Matter 2' group recently conducted a survey of young people's experiences in care. The results are used by officers and elected members to identify areas for improvement, such as increasing young people's understanding of the role of independent reviewing officers. This group helped to revise the format of the PEP and is preparing a DVD to help young children understand the council's Pledge.

## **Economic well-being**

## **Grade 2 (good)**

126. The impact of services in enabling children and young people in care to achieve economic well-being is good. The proportion of care leavers in education, employment and training has fluctuated over the last five years. It has been consistently lower than the averages for care leavers in similar areas and nationally. The most recent in-year figures indicate there has been a significant improvement to 81.3%, which is higher than the authority's target of 77%. The authority is able to identify precise reasons for non-engagement by any young person.
127. In close collaboration with a range of employers and other agencies, the Danesgate Centre has devised a wide range of programmes for young people who are disengaged from education. Case studies show that these are having a considerable impact in re-kindling care leavers' interest in learning and improving their life chances.
128. There is a strong 14-19 partnership which includes the academies, as well as schools maintained by the authority. A two-year pilot programme provides young people, including care leavers, with personalised programmes that include significant work placements. The council's own apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programmes give priority to care leavers and are proving popular with young people.

129. Four care leavers are currently at university, each of which has a kite mark for care. These students are provided with appropriate financial support. They are also supported emotionally through regular contacts from their social workers. Close liaison with pastoral care providers within the universities ensures that the needs of these young people are recognised and met. There are similar protocols for sharing information with further education colleges attended by care leavers. A voluntary post-16 PEP is being developed to strengthen this work.
130. The pathway team provides an effective integrated service for care leavers. A single point of access in the city centre ensures that all services are readily available. Different levels of support and an extensive range of information and advice are available to help care leavers deal with issues in their lives. Those who choose not to engage with services are provided with a 'continuous offer letter' which identifies the range of support which would be most beneficial to them. If the young person eventually contacts any one of the named services, information can be shared and a coherent programme of inter-agency support quickly put in place. Young adults over the age of 21 not in education or training continue to be supported if there is a need for this. All the care leavers who met with inspectors had a pathway plan to which they had contributed. The plans seen were of a good quality and young people make an important contribution to their development and review.
131. All care leavers are suitably housed. The young people who spoke to inspectors were happy with where they lived and felt safe there. The pathway service provides access to a wide range of accommodation and the 'Staying Put' scheme ensures stability in the lives of young people, especially those who wish to continue with their education or who are in the armed forces.

## Quality of provision

## Grade 2 (good)

132. The quality of provision for looked after children and care leavers is good. All local agencies are actively engaged in promoting their safety and well-being. This reflects the high priority accorded to looked after children by the council and its partners. The council's fostering and adoption services together with a children's home are judged as good in the latest inspections. The short breaks care unit for children with a disability is outstanding.
133. The majority of assessments completed in respect of looked after children are of good quality, take appropriate account of their history and contain a clear analysis of risk. Children are routinely seen during assessment and their wishes and feelings are established. Risks to siblings posed by looked after young people are assessed well. Assessments prepared for the Family Proceedings Court in respect of family members' parenting abilities and their capacity for protecting children from further risks are of a high quality. Written agreements are used effectively for children at risk of

entering care due to abuse or neglect after discussion at legal planning meetings and following family group conferences which have discussed the extent to which children could remain within their wider family network.

134. Changing needs of children and young people are routinely monitored and support to placements is effectively harnessed. There are a significant number of front-line staff and managers in children's social care who are able to provide consistency and a historical perspective about the children. The virtual school, local health services, CAMHS and family support workers all contribute well to meet the needs of looked after children and young people. The inspection found examples of outstanding direct work with looked after children and young people.
135. Children's racial, cultural and linguistic identity are considered well overall through work tailored to individual needs. Work with looked after children who have a disability is of a high standard. Examples were seen of sensitive life story work with birth fathers to enable children to understand their heritage and of effective work with disabled parents. The needs of the small number of non-White children in York's care population are suitably taken into account in care planning.
136. The good quality support is appreciated by the children and young people seen by inspectors. All children and parents reported that they are treated with dignity and respect. They explained that they are very well listened to and their views make a difference most of the time. Parents were also very appreciative of the quality of care and support given to their children and to themselves. One commented that the intensive support offered had 'saved my life'.
137. Care planning is soundly undertaken. The majority of care plans reviewed during the inspection were of good quality. Reviews of children's care are appropriately attended by professionals with a meaningful connection to the child. The independent reviewing officer (IRO) team are strongly committed to overseeing the quality of care and to listening to looked after children and young people's voices. They make appropriate challenge to care plans, act to halt emerging delay and effectively ensure that actions to manage risk are followed through. The inspection found clear evidence of listening and taking seriously the views and wishes of parents and children, even if the plan for the child was not in accord with those wishes. Appropriate action has been taken to tackle a lack of capacity in the IRO service due to the increased number entering care. Their caseloads are now as recommended and they have recently been able to undertake the full range of duties as required by statutory guidance.
138. There is very effective consideration of plans to enable children and young people to live in permanent placements or to return home safely. Specialist fostering and adoption staff meet children's social workers very

regularly and the progress of plans is diligently tracked by managers. As a result of this work younger children who cannot return home are speedily placed in permanent placements by means of adoption or placement with connected persons subject to a special guardianship order. The council's adoption performance is very strong. During 2008-11, 19% of children were adopted from care compared to 12% nationally. Additionally the number of children who waited less than 21 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family is very significantly higher at 83% than the national average of 58%.

139. Case recording is generally up to date. Overall the quality is satisfactory and a proportion is of good quality. Training to improve the quality of records as a tool for practice and for care planning is on offer for all social workers.

### **Ambition and prioritisation**

### **Grade 2 (good)**

140. Ambition and prioritisation is good. Partners across all agencies have high aspirations for looked after children and care leavers which are demonstrated in the priority accorded to narrowing the achievement gap between looked after children and all children in York. The Children's Trust has developed a well established culture of integrated working within which the needs of, and performance in relation to, looked after children is well embedded and sharply focused on improving already satisfactory or good performance.
141. Priorities are well articulated within the CYPP 2009-12 and are clearly focused on fluctuations in performance such as placement stability. The council and its partners have achieved good success in some key service priorities such as consistency of social work support before, during and after children become looked after. There is an increased number of good quality local foster care placements, fewer children are placed externally and a recent improvement in the timeliness of reviews of care plans is reflected in the performance against national indicators which is generally in line or better than similar authorities.
142. Senior managers within the city council provide strong direction and leadership in relation to the looked after children's agenda. For example, in understanding the make-up of the looked after children population and how their needs may be best met. This robust management is illustrated by the current exceptionally good multi-agency strategy. It is child-focused, well informed by local and national research and, most importantly, by the views and concerns of children and young people. It explains how the council and partners will respond positively to their wishes and feelings in practical ways. Children and young people met during the inspection confirmed that they felt heard by senior managers.
143. There is good cross-party support for corporate parenting. The recently appointed lead member is well informed of current pressures and

challenges. A very small number of elected members meet regularly with the 'Show Me that I Matter' group. Other members visit the two children's homes and sit on the fostering and adoption panels. All members have access to training in relation to their responsibilities as corporate parents. However, it is recognised that further work is needed to increase elected members' understanding of and involvement in corporate parenting and a new corporate parenting group has been developed although it is yet to have its first meeting. It is also recognised that there is scope to develop the involvement of other departments in the city council within the corporate parenting agenda.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 2 (good)**

144. Leadership and management are good. The rate of looked after children has increased and is above the national average and the rate in similar areas. The reasons for this rise are well understood as arising from young children who require protection along with the outcome of effective work to ensure that a higher than average proportion of older young people remain in care between the ages of 16 to 18 and beyond. Twelve young adults have remained in their foster placements after the age of 18. The council is predicting a reduction in numbers as young people who have been looked after for some time move on from their care settings. Inspectors found no examples where children who should have been looked after did not enter care.
145. In recognition of this, key local priorities are to reduce the rate of looked after children and increase placement stability. Senior managers have invested significant resources in developing and commissioning effective early intervention and edge of care services. Commissioning processes are well regarded by local voluntary and community sector agencies.
146. Joint commissioning and review of external placements by the joint agency panel is excellent. It is exceptionally well managed and monitored by managers who understand the needs of each individual child and young person in depth. Due to a good supply of local foster carers there are few children needing commissioned placements so that these are individually agreed on the basis of specific need. Only seven children are placed externally in independent foster care placements compared to 178 placed with local carers. Good attention is paid to safeguarding needs when seeking placements and a robust process of checking against inspection outcomes and other available information takes place prior to placement. Despite significant recent financial pressures the council took the decision to ensure children remain in external placements if these continue to meet their needs.
147. Weaknesses in services and resources are very well understood and effective action is taken to address these. Strenuous efforts to expand the number of local foster carers have produced a good recent increase in the number of fostering households from 95 in January 2010 to 126 in March



2012. Forty four 'special scheme' carers offer placements to children and young people with challenging behaviour. As a consequence the council can meet the statutory sufficiency duty. Clear improvements in service delivery have been made using the skills of voluntary and community sector providers. For example, providing additional accommodation and one to one and group support to strengthen emotional resilience and self esteem as care leavers move into independence.

148. The workforce strategy clearly prioritises the development of an integrated children's workforce and training. For example, the introduction of induction standards and the opening up of training opportunities within partner agencies to the wider children's workforce. The workforce plan does not yet reflect the diversity of the local population and action has been taken at a corporate level to tackle this. Foster carers are highly valued in York as members of the children's workforce and are included in key strategic planning fora. The local foster care association is also used well by the council to canvass the views of a wider group of carers. Carers enjoy access to the same local benefits package as council employees. Although parents' views are effectively taken into account in care planning for their own children, opportunities for them to be connected to strategic and service planning are limited.
149. Training and learning opportunities for staff across all agencies and carers are varied and well targeted; this was confirmed by staff seen during the inspection. Care planning training is offered annually and there is a regular programme of in-depth training on attachment delivered by local CAMHS as well as training in relation to PEPs and briefings about educational attainment. Foster carers' learning is enhanced through the development of the accredited foundation certificate in partnership with York St John University.
150. All looked after children's cases are allocated to qualified social workers. Senior managers have prioritised the reduction of workloads and have developed a workload weighting system to assist in this. As a result caseloads are generally manageable and have resulted in a greater equity of work across teams. However, balancing the competing demands of child protection, court work and care planning for children in stable placements is reported by social workers to be challenging on occasions.
151. Financial resources for looked after children have been used very effectively. Average placement costs per child have reduced between 2007-8 and 2011-12 by £299 through increased use of local foster carers, including for older children, and a low use of independent agencies and children's home placements. As well as reducing costs this has been beneficial for looked after children by the greater use of family placements and local resources. At a time of financial stringency the council has increased the budget for children's social care by an additional £500,000 for 2012-13 in recognition of the additional demands placed on services by

increased numbers of looked after children. Strong commissioning and effective service delivery has also produced savings while significantly improving the quality of services to families where children are at risk of entering care. For example, the FIRST project has avoided a projected expenditure of around £500,000 against placements that would otherwise have been made.

152. Statutory guidelines in relation to the small number of complaints made by looked after children and young people are followed well. The complaints process is well managed and child-focused. However, the quality of work is not reflected in a separate complaints report that focuses on children's issues. The service works effectively with the children's rights and advocacy services and IROs. All complaints are resolved at the earliest stage. Children can make complaints using a variety of media and each child making a complaint is personally visited by the children's rights service. There is a close working relationship with IROs who are effective advocates for children. Statutory guidelines in relation to complaints made against staff working with children are followed effectively.

## **Performance management and quality assurance**

### **Grade 2 (good)**

153. Performance management is well established across the partnership and agencies are effectively held to account through the work of the strategic management group, the joint agency panel and the CYSCB. Recent work using an external consultant to clarify the roles and responsibilities of practice managers and service managers is helping to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of front-line performance management.
154. Performance against national and local indicators is systematically and comprehensively monitored by the YorOK Children's Trust and by senior managers within children's social care. Most performance targets are met. Service plans are robust. The progress of action to tackle weaker areas of performance is monitored closely and this information, together with national and local research, is used effectively to inform improvements to practice. The outcomes achieved by looked after children are appropriately identified and recorded in individual care planning but the local authority recognises that there is further progress to be made in developing outcome-related evaluation measures of children's progress and in aggregating outcomes for the whole looked after population.
155. Audits of looked after children's cases are routinely undertaken in children's social care and are used well to improve practice. Audits include work undertaken in the fostering and adoption services. Senior managers have a limited role in auditing although they have a good detailed knowledge of individual children whose situations are causing concern. The multi-agency audits undertaken in connection with this inspection did

not consistently deliver a holistic picture of the work audited and the outcomes of the auditing process were not specified.

156. Social workers overseeing the case of looked after children and care leavers benefit from regular management oversight and supervision. Management decisions are routinely evidenced on children's case recording. Inspectors identified some good examples of the appropriate intervention and oversight by senior managers in very complex cases. The quality of supervision is audited annually but does not include staff working in the adoption and fostering service and in the children's homes and this is an omission.

## Record of main findings:

<b>Safeguarding services</b>	
Overall effectiveness	Good
Capacity for improvement	Outstanding
<b>Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people</b>	
Children and young people are safe and feel safe	Good
Quality of provision	Good
The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe	Good
Ambition and prioritisation	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Performance management and quality assurance	Good
Partnership working	Outstanding
Equality and diversity	Good
<b>Services for looked after children</b>	
Overall effectiveness	Good
Capacity for improvement	Outstanding
<b>How good are outcomes for looked after children and care leavers?</b>	
Being healthy	Good
Staying safe	Good
Enjoying and achieving	Good
Making a positive contribution, including user engagement	Good
Economic well-being	Good
Quality of provision	Good
Ambition and prioritisation	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Performance management and quality assurance	Good
Equality and diversity	Good

This page is intentionally left blank



## York Corporate Parenting Board Draft Terms of Reference

### **Vision of York Strategy for Looked After Children**

The vision of the York strategy for looked after children is simple - we want our children and young people to have everything that good parents want for their children. We want our looked after children and young people to work with us, along with their parents and carers, in shaping how we manage and organise the planning, resources and services that support and care for them. We want our children and young people to be happy and healthy, both physically and emotionally, to be safe and protected from harm and exploitation, and to be supported each step of the way to adult life. We want them to achieve their potential, especially at school, to make the most of the learning opportunities they are offered and to participate in the decisions affecting their care and their lives. This includes making the transition to adulthood with continuity of support, access to good jobs and higher education, while living in good housing and being financially secure. Our strategy invites us to work together with common purpose, putting the care of our looked after children at the heart of everything we do.

### **Purpose of Board**

- To raise awareness of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities among elected members and officers.
- To provide a forum for elected members to oversee the progress of all looked after children, through the implementation of the Looked After Children Strategy 2012-15, and to monitor the delivery of York's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care.
- To ensure that all looked after children and young people have a positive experience and that the strategy enhances their outcomes
- To encourage all partners, whether they work for health or social care services or the voluntary sector, to work in an integrated manner in the best interests of looked after children and care leavers;
- To lead cultural and behavioural change to promote better outcomes for looked after children and care leavers;
- To hold all partners to account for their role in the delivery of services to looked after children and care leavers.

## Remit

### York Corporate Parenting Board will:

- Provide leadership across the city to create a more effective and efficient health and wellbeing for looked after children;
- Take responsibility for the quality of services for looked after children
- Work effectively with and through partnership bodies, with clear lines of accountability and communication;
- Share expertise and intelligence and use this synergy to provide creative solutions to complex issues;
- Agree the strategic priorities for services for looked after children, as a Board
- Make a positive difference, improving the outcomes for all looked after children and those who use our services.

### York Corporate Parenting Board will not:

- Manage work programmes or oversee specific pieces of work – acknowledging that operational management needs to be given the freedom to manage.
- Be focused on the delivery of specific services – the Board will concentrate on the “big picture”.
- Take responsibility for the outputs and outcomes of specific services – these are best monitored at the level of the specific organisations responsible for them.
- Be the main vehicle for the voice of looked after children – this will be the responsibility of Show Me That I Matter (the children in care council). The Board will however regularly listen to and respect the views of individuals and the wider looked after children’s community.

## Support to the Board

- Administrative and governance support to the Corporate Parenting Board will be provided by Democratic Services. A Democracy Officer will be responsible for organising meetings, publishing agenda papers, attending meetings and publishing minutes of each meeting. This officer will also advise the Board on constitutional procedures where necessary.
- Technical support in preparing reports for the Board and giving advice to the Board in relation to looked after children and care leavers will be provided by the Directorate of Adults, Children and Education.

## Details

### 1. Name

1.1 The Board will be known as the York Corporate Parenting Board (“the Board”)

### 2. Membership

2.1 The Membership of the Board will consist of:

- The Cabinet member for Education, Children and Young People’s Services
- The elected member on the Adoption Panel and Fostering and Sharing Care Panel.
- The elected members on the Show Me That I Matter Panel (children in care council)
- The elected members who visit Wenlock Terrace and The Glen
- Any other appropriate elected or co-opted members appointed to the Corporate Parenting Board by the Council.

### 3. Constitutional Status

3.1 The Corporate Parenting Board is established in the Council’s Constitution and as such will adhere to its constitutional rules around the convening of meetings and publication of business.

### 4. Quorum

4.1 The Quorum shall be 3 members

### 5. Chair

5.1 The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board shall be elected from the membership of the Board at the first meeting and thereafter will be agreed by full Council annually.

5.2 In the absence of the Chair the Vice-Chair shall chair the meeting.

**6. Frequency of Meetings**

6.1 The Board shall meet no less often than four times a year.

**7. Access to Meetings**

7.1 The public shall have the same right of access to meetings, agendas, reports and background papers as apply to any other advisory body supported by the Council.

7.2 The public shall have the same rights to address the meeting as apply at all meetings of the Council under the Public Participation Scheme.

**8. Conduct**

8.1 The Board and its members will operate in accordance with the standards of behaviour and principles required by the Council's Code of Conduct, which applies to both councillors and any person appointed as a co-opted member to a board or committee of the Council.