

**Notice of a public meeting of  
Corporate Parenting Board**

**To:** Councillors Brooks (Chair), Cannon, Cuthbertson,  
D'Agorne, Douglas, Funnell, Gunnell and Runciman

**Date:** Monday, 15 February 2016

**Time:** 5.00 pm

**Venue:** The Auden Room - Ground Floor, West Offices (G047)

**A G E N D A**

**1. Declarations of Interest**

At this point, Members are asked to declare:

- any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests,
- any prejudicial interests or
- any disclosable pecuniary interests

which they may have in respect of business on this agenda.

**2. Minutes (Pages 1 - 6)**

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2015.

**3. Public Participation**

At this point in the meeting members of the public who have registered 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 Friday 12 February 2016.**

## **Filming or Recording Meetings**

Residents are welcome to photograph, film or record Councillors and Officers at all meetings open to the press and public. This includes the use of social media reporting, i.e. tweeting. Anyone wishing to film, record or take photos at any public meeting should contact the Democracy Officers (whose contact details are at the foot of this agenda) in advance of the meeting.

The Council's protocol on Webcasting, Filming & Recording of Meetings ensures that these practices are carried out in a manner both respectful to the conduct of the meeting and all those present. It can be viewed at

[https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/6453/protocol\\_for\\_webcasting\\_filming\\_and\\_recording\\_council\\_meetingspdf](https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/6453/protocol_for_webcasting_filming_and_recording_council_meetingspdf)

- 4. Corporate Parenting Board - Draft Strategy for Looked After Children 2016-2020 and Update on Arrangements** (Pages 7-10)  
Board Members will be asked to consider and endorse the draft Looked After Children's Strategy 2016-2020. They will also meet an independent advisor and have the opportunity to discuss arrangements for the future provision of independent professional advice to the Board.
- 5. Work Plan**  
To consider the Board's work plan for future meetings.
- 6. Urgent Business**  
Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

Democracy Officers

Name: Catherine Clarke and Louise Cook (job-share)

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For more information about any of the following please contact the Democratic Services Officers responsible for servicing this meeting:

- Registering to speak
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports and
- For receiving reports in other formats

Contact details are set out above.

**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)

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City of York Council

Committee Minutes

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Meeting	Corporate Parenting Board
Date	8 December 2015
Present	Councillors Brooks, Cannon, Cuthbertson, D'Agorne, Douglas, Funnell, Gunnell and Runciman

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**24. Election of Chair**

Members were given the opportunity to nominate a Chair to the Board.

Resolved: That Cllr Brooks be elected as the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board.

**25. Declarations of Interest**

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the business on the agenda or other general interests they might have had within the remit of the Board. None were declared.

**26. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 2 February 2015 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**27. Public Participation**

It was reported that there were no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

## 28. Corporate Parenting - A New Vision and Approach to the Care of Our Looked After Children in York

The Board considered three presentations that highlighted the work of the Multi Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP) group and the findings from the 2015 U Matter Survey.

The presentations described how City of York Council and its partners proposed to improve further outcomes for all Looked After Children (LAC) and asked Members to consider the most effective processes, practices and ways of working to achieve a strategic and cohesive approach in delivering and maintaining their corporate parenting responsibilities.

The Strategy Author of the draft revised Looked After Children's Strategy was in attendance to highlight the key findings from his consultations with Looked After Children, their parents, carers and with the wider community of children's services providers across and beyond the City.

The Strategy Author highlighted his areas of work and confirmed:

- York had made good progress over the last 3 years which included a significant reduction in the overall numbers of LAC, better health and educational outcomes, excellent work with those leaving care and the establishment of a virtual school.
- That although the new strategy was good and the performance from Children's Services was very effective, everyone who had been involved with the development of the new strategy believed, *'good enough is **not** good enough'* and wanted to continue to raise ambitions through the strategy to ensure that children who were looked after achieved the very best possible outcomes.
- The vision and strategic goals had not changed but the way to approach them would be different and included six new strategic themes; ambition, personalisation, normality, trust, accountability and efficiency. These themes would support a child through to adult life and were also intended to challenge and inspire everyone who worked with Looked After Children.
- A new vision, roles and responsibilities for foster care in York had been considered and would include new protocols and support arrangements to give delegated decision making to more experienced foster carers.

- The remodelling of the support arrangements would ensure improved support was available.
- Every arrangement where a child or young person was placed outside of the city was under review and (as part of the Make York Home initiative) where it was in their best interest such children/young people would have the opportunity to return to York for their care.
- All children would have a health passport which would support both their and their carers understanding of their ongoing health needs.

The Assistant Director of Childrens Specialist Services stated that York had a good record of placing and keeping children within the city. He discussed the innovative work that would significantly strengthen the Councils fostering offer and allow more children and young people to stay in York for their care.

Members noted that the following would need to be attained to achieve these outcomes:

- Changes to the way foster carers were involved in the wider planning arrangements for the children they looked after.
- A review of the various professional roles involved in the care of looked after children.
- Changes to the recruitment, professional development and support for foster carers

The Children Rights Officers were in attendance to highlight the results of the 2015 survey of York's Looked After Children. They confirmed that the 2015 U Matter Survey was rolled out between February and April 2015 and it collected views of children and young people in Care. The survey was available in paper format and online and was promoted in various ways including on the Show Me that I Matter Facebook page.

A total of 55 young people in care completed the survey and some of the results showed:

- 87% of young people either agreed or strongly agreed that City of York provided good quality placements for children and young people in care.
- 90% felt they could make their bedroom feel like their own.
- 65% said their social worker was reliable, which was a 16% drop from the previous year.
- 85% knew how to contact their social worker.

- 85% said their social worker treats them with respect although 32% of young people asked for a change of social worker.
- 78% knew who their Independent Reviewing Officer was compared to only 48% last year.
- 94% of young people knew who their designated teacher was.
- 89% felt they had the right amount of support in school.
- 76% knew about their Personal Education Plan compared to 54% the previous year.
- 85% were aware of the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service.
- 90% felt their carers take care of their health very well or well.
- 89% said they received enough help when getting ready to leave care.
- 63% rated their overall experience as being very good or good compared to 76% the previous year. Some young people indicated this was due to feelings about being taken into care rather than the quality of care they received.
- 33% of the surveys received were completed by a male and 67% were female.

Members discussed the new strategy and noted the ambitions, challenges and opportunities the new strategic approach would present and in answer to Members questions it was confirmed:

- Timescales for achieving each goal and milestone would be highlighted within the strategy.
- Targets and milestones would be measured against each individual and not as a group allowing the introduction of personalised care to ensure each child could celebrate their own achievements.
- All Looked After Children had received a card which highlighted relevant contact details.

Members discussed ways to raise awareness of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities and develop expertise and knowledge among all elected Members. They also discussed the most effective future for the Corporate Parenting Board and thanked officers for all the information received.



Resolved:

- (i) That Group Leaders be asked to consider the draft revised Looked After Children's Strategy.
- (ii) That when completed the new and refocused strategy be fully endorsed by Council.
- (iii) That a refreshed focus, role, operation model and composition for the Corporate Parenting Board, to reflect the wider corporate parenting agenda across the Council, be considered and established at the next meeting.
- (iv) That clear lines of accountability for the Board and the Terms of Reference be considered.
- (v) That the appointment of an Independent Advisor to the Board be considered once the strategy for Looked After Children was in operation.
- (vi) That the Corporate Parenting Board workplan be updated to establish any key standards expected of Members in being effective political 'corporate parents' and in championing the needs of and outcomes for children in care.
- (vii) That any training required by Members to enable them to undertake their corporate parenting role adequately and appropriately be considered and raised at the next meeting.
- (viii) That all Corporate Parenting Board meetings take place formally with a rolling confidential agenda item.
- (ix) That bi annual performance and finance updates be brought to the Board.

Reason: In order to further strengthen corporate parenting arrangements in the city.

Cllr Brooks, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.55 pm].

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**Corporate Parenting Board****15 February 2016**

Report of the Assistant Director of Childrens Specialist Services [CSS]

**Corporate Parenting Board - Draft Strategy for Looked After Children 2016-2020 and Update on Arrangements****Summary**

1. At the last Board Meeting on 8 December 2015, Members received some presentations on the strategic planning to further improve the outcomes for York's Looked After Children. Specifically these presentations included:
  - a) A draft strategy – Good enough is not Good enough – Improving the Outcomes for Looked After Children 2016 – 2020.
  - b) Bring them all Home, now re titled Make York Home – a project to ensure that wherever possible York's Looked After Children are cared for by the City and in the City.
  - c) A View from our Young People – the outcome of the 2015 survey of York's Looked After Children.

Informed by these presentations, the Board considered and debated its role and specifically, how it;

- a) can support and oversee the implementation of the new strategy.
- b) might raise awareness and promote fuller participation in this agenda across all elected members.
- c) effectively scrutinise progress, in the context of the priorities set out in the new strategy.
- d) align with the wider governance and accountability arrangements for the oversight of Looked After Children arrangements.

**Outcomes from Last Board Meeting**

- 2 The Board resolved;
  - a) That Group Leaders be asked to consider the draft revised Looked After Children's Strategy.

- b) That when completed the new and refocused strategy is fully endorsed by Council.
- c) That a refreshed focus, role, operation model and composition for the Corporate Parenting Board, to reflect the wider corporate parenting agenda across the Council, be considered and established at the next meeting.
- d) That clear lines of accountability for the Board and the Terms of Reference be considered.
- e) That the appointment of an Independent Advisor to the Board be considered once the strategy for Looked After Children was in operation.
- f) That the Corporate Parenting Board work plan be updated to establish any key standards expected of Members in being effective political 'corporate parents' and in championing the needs of and outcomes for children in care.
- g) That any training required by Members to enable them to undertake their corporate parenting role adequately and appropriately be considered and raised at the next meeting.
- h) That all Corporate Parenting Board meetings take place formally with a rolling confidential agenda item.
- i) That bi annual performance and finance updates be brought to the Board.

### **Issues for Board to Consider**

- 3. At today's meeting, and in pursuance of the above recommendations, Board Members are invited to:
  - a. Receive a final update on the draft strategy for Looked After Children.
  - b. Consider any amendments, additions or challenges they would like to make.
  - c. Agree the arrangements for the presentation of the new strategy to Full Council.
  - d. Hear a proposal for arrangements to provide independent professional advice to the Board.

- e. Consider how to use the independent advisor role to develop:
  - i. revised terms of reference
  - ii. a new work plan
  - iii. a framework for the provision of bi annual finance and performance reports

### **Council Plan**

4. Ensuring safe and effective care arrangements for Looked After Children falls within the Council Plan key priority “A Focus on Frontline Services”.

### **Implications**

#### **5. Financial**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this paper. However, if the proposal for an independent specialist advisor to a newly configured Corporate Parenting Board [CPB] is agreed there may be a small cost associated with the provision of such advice.

- **Human Resources (HR)**

There are no implications

- **Equalities**

There are no implications. However, the provision of specialist independent advice to a newly configured CPB could enhance the Board’s ability to understand and challenge the looked after offer to children from protected groups.

- **Legal**

There are no implications

- **Crime and Disorder**

There are no implications

- **Information Technology (IT)**

There are no implications

- **Property**

There are no implications

**Recommendations**

- 6. In light of today’s discussion of the above issues it is recommended that the Board:
  - i. endorses the draft Looked After Children’s Strategy 2016 - 2020
  - ii. confirms the arrangements for independent professional advice
  - iii. develops and confirms new Terms of Reference
  - iv. develops and agrees a work plan for 2016/17

Reason: In order to strengthen corporate parenting arrangements in the city.

**Contact Details**

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Jon Stonehouse  
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**Report Approved**  **Date** 05/02/16

**Wards Affected:** All

**Annexes**

Draft Strategy for Looked After Children 2016 – 2020 (to follow – draft to be published 10.02.16)

## **York's Strategy for Children who are Looked After 2016-2020**

*including children on the edge of care, children who are adopted, those subject to Special Guardianship Orders or Child Arrangements Orders, and Care Leavers*

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## 1. Foreword

Welcome to York's new Strategy for Children who are Looked After by the Council. This document also serves as York's Corporate Parenting Strategy.

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

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

We should be proud of this performance, which would be the envy of many cities.

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

For a start, we have widened the scope of this strategy to ensure that it explicitly covers children on the edge of care, children in the care of other local authorities who are living in York, and children subject to Special Guardianship Orders and Child Arrangements Orders. **We recognise and welcome the growth in the numbers of Foster Carers who are connected through family ties to the children they look after.**

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

It could be said that our present work with Children who are Looked After is "good enough". But our mantra in York is that "*good enough is not good enough*". We should be doing much better than this. We want the very best for every single Child who is Looked After - just as we do for our own children. This Strategy, which has been endorsed by the full City of York Council and its partners, sets out how we will achieve this.

[Co-signed by:

Cllr Jenny Brooks  
Steve Stewart  
Jon Stonehouse]

## 2. The new Strategy on a page

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

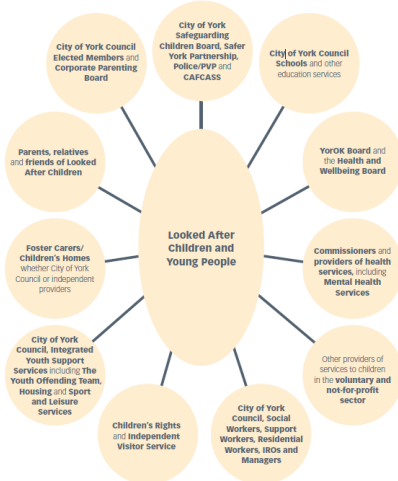
<b>Six Strategic Themes:</b> <b><i>Ambition...Personalisation...Normality...Trust...Accountability...Efficiency</i></b>	
<b>Strategic Outcomes</b>	<b>Priority projects and actions</b>
<b><i>Respect and Involvement</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remodel support services for Children who are Looked After, ensuring someone is always available on the telephone, and that bureaucracy is minimised for straightforward issues</li> <li>Review all decision-making processes to ensure they are delegated to the most appropriate level – recognising that this may be different for different children, and different foster carers</li> </ul>
<b><i>Good, Safe Placements</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with local foster carers to develop a new Vision for foster care in York encompassing recruitment, roles, responsibilities, remuneration, development and support – recognising that “caring” will always be the most important element of their role</li> <li>Change the way in which we deal with the most complex cases by building increased local capacity</li> <li>Review arrangements for every child placed outside York so that, where it is in their best interests, we can “<b>Make York Home</b>” for everyone</li> </ul>
<b><i>Relationships</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce a new protocol for working with birth families, in consultation with the young people affected</li> </ul>
<b><i>Identity</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review all policies and procedures against the new strategic theme of “normality” to ensure that so far as possible, the experience of young people who are Looked After does not differentiate them from their peers</li> </ul>
<b><i>Education</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tackle the challenges around educational attainment with increased vigour and purpose</li> <li>Review and implement as appropriate the recommendations of the Rees Centre report about the educational progress of Children who are Looked After</li> </ul>
<b><i>Health</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce a health passport for all Children who are Looked After which supports their, and their carers’, understanding of their health needs</li> <li>Health colleagues will work with colleagues from the LA to implement the recommendations arising from the 2015 local review of compliance with statutory guidance for the Health of Looked After Children</li> </ul>
<b><i>Emotional Wellbeing and mental health</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construct a profile of the emotional health needs of children in care in order to inform commissioning arrangements across the City of York</li> <li><b>Ensure that the principle of early intervention is understood and embedded</b></li> <li>Understand better if this group of young people is more likely to engage in risky behaviours, including self-harm, and if so, what can be done to help</li> </ul>
<b><i>Moving to Adulthood</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work to ensure that “Staying Put” becomes the norm in York, and is available for every young person that wants it</li> </ul>
<b><i>Corporate Parenting</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refresh the remit and purpose of the Corporate Parenting Board</li> <li>Introduce a new Performance Scorecard for Children who are Looked After that fully exploits the additional functionality of MOSAIC</li> </ul>

### 3. About the Strategy - Ownership, Drivers, and Scope

#### Ownership

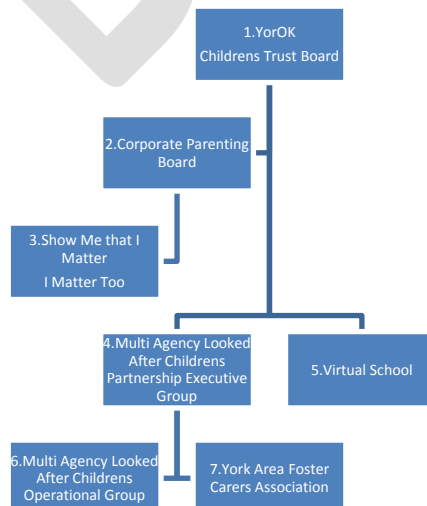
This strategy has been produced by the Executive of the Multi-Agency Partnership for Children who are Looked After in York (MALAP). References to "we" in the document should be taken to mean all of the Agencies who are represented on MALAP. A full list of Members, current at the time of writing, is at **Annex E**. The diagram below illustrates the range of agencies involved with Children who are Looked after in York.

[NOTE: diagram below to be checked for accuracy]



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

These relationships are illustrated in the diagram below. [Note: to be checked for accuracy/currency]



## Drivers

Although this is a local strategy, it takes account of current *national* guidance and best practice. In particular, in preparing this document we have had regard to:

- Recent statutory guidance on promoting the health and well-being of looked after children<sup>1</sup>
- The Rees Centre report into Educational Outcomes for Looked After Children in England<sup>2</sup>

[Do you want to include any others?]

This strategy also sits within a *local* strategic framework which includes the over-arching Children and Young People's Plan for the city produced by the YorOK Board. The current Plan has been revised at the same time as this strategy; care has therefore been taken to ensure consistency between the two documents. In particular, this Strategy is consistent with the theme of *early help* within the new Plan. Children who are Looked After are identified within the Plan as one of the *priority groups* meriting special attention.

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

[List to be confirmed; to include:

- The Sufficiency Strategy
- Early Help Strategy
- The NEET Strategy
- The CAMHS Strategy and the Local Transformation Plan
- Voice and Involvement Strategy]

[Alternatively, to replace some of the references to strategies with references to storyboards]

The views of Children who are Looked After have been a particularly important influence on this strategy. A summary of the 2015 U Matter Survey is at **Annex B**.

## Scope

This strategy is intended to apply to all of the Children who are Looked After by the City of York, including those placed outside the city. It is also relevant to children placed for adoption, children subject to Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) and Child Arrangements Orders (CAOs), and Care Leavers. In January 2016 there were **196** children and young people in care in York, and approximately 50 families with SGOs or CAOs.

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

We also regard Children on the Edge of Care as within the scope of this Strategy, although the main actions relevant to this group are described in other documents, such as the Early Help Strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/413368/Promoting\\_the\\_health\\_and\\_well-being\\_of\\_looked-after\\_children.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413368/Promoting_the_health_and_well-being_of_looked-after_children.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/EducationalProgressLookedAfterChildrenOverviewReport\\_Nov2015.pdf](http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/EducationalProgressLookedAfterChildrenOverviewReport_Nov2015.pdf)

However, by including them within the scope, we are sending an important signal to all those who work with Children who are Looked After that our collective responsibilities extend to preventative work, as well as to support for young people after they come into care.

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

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## 4. Vision, Strategic Outcomes, and new Strategic Themes

### Vision

Our Vision remains as follows: *“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.”* In other words: to be happy and healthy, safe and protected, and supported each step of the way to adult life. This Vision was first articulated in the 2012 Strategy and still holds good.

### Strategic Outcomes

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

#### 1. Respect and Involvement

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

#### 2. Good, Safe Placements

*Children and young people are in good placements where they feel safe and supported, and can remain for as long as they need to. They receive information about their placement in advance and are listened to if they have concerns about it at any time. The placement feels like home and provides them with a positive experience of family life or residential care.*

#### 3. Relationships

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

#### 4. Identity

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

#### 5. Education

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

#### 6. Health

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

#### 7. Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health

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

#### 8. Moving to Adulthood

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

## 9. Corporate Parenting

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

### New Strategic Themes

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

As well as the Vision and the Strategic Outcomes described above, we will now introduce into our strategic thinking *six new strategic themes*:

- **Ambition** – *‘good enough’ is not good enough*  
We want to introduce a fresh spirit of ambition into our work. Are we truly being as ambitious for the young people in our care as we would be for our own children? How can we ever be satisfied until health, emotional health, educational and employment outcomes for Children who are Looked After match those of their peers? We need to ensure there is a spirit of constructive challenge in our debates about the way forward, and to reinvigorate our whole approach.
- **Personalisation** – *every child and every family is different*  
We need to recognise that “Children who are Looked After” are not a homogeneous group, and that what works for one child (or family) may not work for another. Their circumstances, backgrounds, capabilities and aspirations may be entirely different. Our policies and practices need to be capable of differentiating between each unique individual – one size does not fit all.
- **Normality** – *every child and young person is entitled to a normal, stable, caring family life*  
We recognise that this word will be challenging for some – this is deliberate. We need to ask ourselves in relation to every policy we introduce, and every process we operate, *is this normal?* Obviously, being taken into care can never be completely “normal” – but, for example, having to go through bureaucratic loops to organise a sleepover with a friend is certainly not normal. Points like these are raised with us very often by the young people themselves – the thing they most dislike is being differentiated from their peers. **This will require adjustments to the roles and responsibilities of our most experienced Foster Carers, and may be particularly appropriate for those who are already connected to the young people in their care through family ties.**
- **Trust** – *as professionals we need to trust each other better, and young people even more*  
Many of our systems and processes are designed to minimise risk. However this is sometimes at the expense of commonsense, and certainly of “normality”. We also inevitably on occasions retreat behind organisational boundaries. We can’t afford to do this in the future – we need to

ensure that all decisions relating to Children who are Looked After are delegated to the level closest to the child wherever possible. There can be no room for professional preciousness or organisational silos. That said, and bearing in mind the preceding points, the extent to which we can trust each individual child will vary from case to case, and needs sensitive judgement. We will also only delegate responsibility to experienced Foster Carers, where we can do so safely and in full cognisance of any risks.

- **Accountability** - *we need to be clear who is responsible for what*

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

- **Efficiency** – *we have to live within our means*

Whilst services for children in York have been prioritised within Council and other Agencies' budgets, they cannot be completely immune from the downward pressure on public expenditure. We would be being dishonest if we failed to recognise that saving money must also be a driver for us over the period covered by this Strategy. Many of the improvements we want to see are not expensive in themselves, because they are more about a change of attitude than an elaborate new process. Some, in fact, will potentially be cheaper, because few people will need to be involved in individual decisions.

We believe that these six themes will prompt us to **remodel** significant elements of the current "system" that surrounds Children who are Looked After in York, as well as carrying on with a process of **continuous improvement**. This is outlined in more detail in the next Chapter.



## 5. Priority Actions and Projects

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

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

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

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

### 1. Respect and Involvement

- **Priority actions:**
  - Remodel support services for Children who are Looked After, ensuring someone is always available on the telephone, and that bureaucracy is minimised for straightforward issues
  - Review all decision-making processes to ensure they are delegated to the most appropriate level – recognising that this may be different for different children, and different foster carers
- **Continuous improvements**
  - Take steps to improve the consistency/continuity of case workers, recognising that this is a national issue
  - Further improve the quality of recording information
  - Strengthen the link between the care leavers' consultation group and the Show Me That I Matter panel
  - Update the Pack for Children who are Looked After, and incorporate comments from the young people into the complaints leaflet
  - Ensure that Children who are Looked After, and their Carers, have a clear package of York benefits (e.g. York Card)
  - Ensure every foster carer has a CYC email address and the technology and training to use it
  - Remove all unnecessary bureaucracy, e.g. around matters such as expenses
  - Ensure that our policies take full account of the changing ethnic make-up of York
- **Ideas for further consideration**
  - Consider how best to celebrate the achievements both of long-serving foster carers and of the young people themselves. Some have suggested a regular Event; others feel that this

unnecessarily differentiates Children who are Looked After. We will debate these issues further

- Allow Foster Carers to log into the Client Management System
- Establish a fund to enable older children to have experiences such as a foreign holiday

## 2. Good, Safe Placements

### • **Priority Actions**

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

### • **Continuous Improvements**

- Ensure that permanence planning for Children who are Looked after is promptly actioned, and take all possible steps to improve placement stability
- 25% of children have received written information about their new foster carers prior to placement; this progress needs to be maintained to achieve 100%.
- Further work to ensure that all of York’s children are being placed with providers/ settings/schools with good or outstanding judgments from Ofsted
- Introduce better arrangements for succession planning for foster carers, taking into account the age profile of the present workforce, and attrition rates
- Embedding supervision arrangements and fostering standards for foster carers
- Upskilling foster carers in relation to Early Years development issues
- Ensure we have timely emergency placements, assessments and support for those who are looked after as a result of homelessness
- Ensure we understand, and can articulate, the impact of policies to support Children on the Edge of Care

### • **Ideas for further consideration**

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

## 3. Relationships

### • **Priority Actions**

- Introduce a new protocol for working with birth families

### • **Continuous Improvements**

- Ensure that support is offered to children and families under Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) and Child Arrangements Orders (CAOs), and that all policies and procedures take into account the welcome rise in kinship or connected carers

- **Ideas for further consideration**
  - Possible interactions between experienced foster carers and birth families

#### 4. Identity

- **Priority Actions**
  - Review all policies and procedures against the new strategic theme of “normality” to ensure that so far as possible, the experience of young people who are Looked After does not differentiate them from their peers
- **Continuous Improvements**
  - Young people have expressed concern about the use of abbreviations and jargon, such as *LAC*, *contact* and *siblings*: everyone needs to take care to use jargon-free language
  - More Independent Visitors (aiming for one for every child who wants one)
- **Ideas for further consideration**
  - Investigate the potential for creative arts projects to provide an additional medium within which children and young people who are looked after can explore issues of identity

#### 5. Education

- **Priority Actions**
  - Tackle the challenges around educational attainment with increased vigour and purpose
  - Review and implement as appropriate the recommendations of the Rees Centre report about the educational progress of Children who are Looked After
- **Continuous Improvements**
  - Despite the significant improvement in the PEP completion rate, the target is 100%, and further work is needed to improve consistency and quality
  - Support the Virtual School in its self-evaluation processes, and to implement its Improvement Plan
- **Ideas for further consideration**
  - Joint training for social workers and teachers

#### 6. Health

- **Priority Actions**
  - Introduce a health passport for all Children who are Looked After which supports their, and their carers', understanding of their health needs
  - Health colleagues will work with colleagues from the LA to implement the recommendations arising from the 2015 local review of compliance with statutory guidance for the Health of Looked After Children
- **Continuous Improvements**
  - Timely sharing across agencies to ensure initial and review health assessments are promptly undertaken, are of high quality, with an increased emphasis on participation, and that improvements are consolidated
  - Ensure all children in care can make an informed choice about attendance at Health Assessments and feel engaged in the process, which should not unnecessarily differentiate them from their peers

- Ensure we commission health assessments for young people not educated in York schools
- Improve the uptake and recording of immunisation records for all children and young people
- Improve the numbers of Looked after children who are registered with a Dentist, with a target of 100%
- Work with Primary Care colleague to ensure Looked after children are permanently registered with a GP and temporary registrations are used only in exceptional circumstances
- **Ideas for further consideration**
  - Consider if the model of the Virtual School offers any lessons for the health community (e.g., a “Virtual Clinic”)

## 7. Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health

- **Priority Actions**
  - Construct a profile of the emotional health needs of children in care to inform commissioning arrangements across the city of York
  - **Ensure that the principle of early intervention is understood and embedded**
  - Understand better if this group of young people is more likely to engage in risky behaviours, including self-harm, and if so, what can be done to help
- **Continuous Improvements**
  - Work with the new mental health provider to develop services for children in care, ensuring that the “offer” is clearly articulated
  - Implement the Transformation Plan that has emerged as part of the national "Future in Mind" initiative
  - Improve post discharge follow up CAMHS services
  - Children and young people, who are on the edge of care will often benefit from targeted input from the CAMHS service. It is crucial that these children are a priority for prompt intervention and support to prevent the need for children to leave their families and communities
- **Ideas for further consideration**
  - Set up a Children who are Looked After Reference Group to support York’s CAMHS Executive

## 8. Moving To Adulthood

- **Priority Actions**
  - Work to ensure that “Staying Put” becomes the norm in York, and is available for every young person that wants it
- **Continuous Improvements**
  - Ensure continued progress in the range of moving on accommodation options for care leavers
  - Ensure advice , guidance and support for young people promotes the optimum education, training and employment options
  - Upskilling foster carers in relation to the Life Skills needed for those about to leave care

- Ensure that young people aged 21-25 are enabled and supported to return to learn with financial support, if they are planning to do so
- Ensure that all care leavers are prioritised for work experience, training, apprenticeship and employment in the council
- 56% of Care Leavers were in Education, training and employment at 19. Whilst this rates as good performance, this area remains a priority
- **Ideas for further consideration**
  - Explore different residential models for those leaving care but not ready to set up on their own
  - Subsidised Council Tax for care leavers for the first two years
  - Use Family Group Conferences more creatively when young people are approaching leaving care to ensure all parties have the appropriate support
  - Guaranteed Interviews for care-experienced young people within the York business community
  - Set up some form of mentoring service for young people by older more stable care-experienced young people
  - Establish an “alumni” scheme for care-experienced young people

## 9. Corporate Parenting

- **Priority Actions**
  - Refresh the remit and purpose of the Corporate Parenting Board
  - Introduce a new Performance Scorecard for Children who are Looked After that fully exploits the new functionality of MOSAIC (see Chapter 6)
- **Continuous Improvements**
  - Work with the Corporate Parenting Board to ensure that all Elected Members are aware of their responsibilities and play an active role
  - Seek the formal endorsement of the full City of York Council for this Strategy and the signature of every Elected Member on the Pledge
  - Increase the number of visits by Elected Members to the Glen Short Breaks Centre and Wenlock Children’s Home
  - Review all governance arrangements for Children who are Looked After to ensure they are fit for purpose and in accordance with the new Strategic Themes
  - Review and improve data-sharing arrangements between Agencies, and improve communications between LA Staff and commissioned Health Providers, and between Social Workers and the Virtual School
  - Ensure that all of the actions that flow from this Strategy are joined up appropriately with those directed at providing Early Help, and support for Troubled Families
  - Ensure that legitimate attention to systems and accountability is never at the expense of building stable, caring relationships with some of our most vulnerable young people
  - Ensure that officers continue to pay due regard to the voice of the child in developing the ideas outlined in this Strategy
- **Ideas for further consideration**

- Joint access to individual Agencies' IT systems
- More joint work with North and East Yorkshire

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## 6. Milestones, Measures and Monitoring

As indicated in the previous Chapter, in order better to monitor our progress against the implementation of this Strategy, we will introduce a new comprehensive Scorecard for Children who are Looked After. This will be published on the YorOK website.

Our intention is to set a small number of targets against all nine of the strategic outcomes, and to monitor them regularly through the MALAP Executive and the Corporate Parenting Board. The targets will include national indicators reported to government, locally-agreed measures, and qualitative assessments. We will also undertake an exercise to articulate, against each target, what it is telling us and who is the primary “owner” of the target in terms both of providing the data and accounting for performance.

We will also monitor the individual projects described in the previous chapter through the establishment of appropriate milestones. We expect substantial progress to have been made on all of the priority projects in the course of 2016.

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

## Annex A: Progress Since the Last Strategy

This Annex contains some statistical information, as well as brief details of key developments in the services for Children Looked After in York since the publication of the last strategy in 2012.

### The Population of Children Looked After

In York, the number of Looked After Children has been reducing over recent years, stabilising at around 200.

Year end Looked After population	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
<b>Total</b>	255	259	237	219	198

We believe this is due to improving local practices and the impact of our early help strategy and local arrangements.

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

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
<b>Local placements</b>	225	230	212	197	178
<b>Out of city</b>	30	29	25	22	20
<b>Total</b>	255	259	237	219	198

Routine consideration is now given to placing children with connected people and family members. As at March 2015, 24 children were placed with connected people; 25 sibling groups were all placed together (93 children in total) with 37 children who are part of a sibling group not living with at least one sibling. Some children (12) are placed with their parents under care orders with a view to rehabilitation upon the discharge of the order.

### Outcomes for children in care and care leavers

In terms of health and wellbeing outcomes for children looked after in York, we know the following.

Educational attainment gaps between children in care and their peers are wide across all levels and continue to represent a major challenge for us (as for most other authorities). There has however been a



significant improvement at Key Stage 2, where the gap has narrowed more in York than the national average:

<b>Outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 for Children Looked After (CLA)</b>				
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
L4+ English & Maths CLA National	42%	45%	48%	n/a
L4+ English & Maths Non CLA National	75%	76%	79%	n/a
Gap - national	33%	31%	31%	n/a
L4+ English & Maths CLA York	56%	40%	33%	73%
L4+ English & Maths Non CLA York	86%	84%	69%	68%
<b>Gap - York</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>-5%</b>

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

<b>Outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4 for Children Looked After (CLA)</b>					
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14 Old methodology	2013/14 New methodology	2014/15
5+A-C IEM CLA National	15%	16%	14%	12%	n/a
5+A-C IEM Non CLA National	59%	59%	55%	52%	n/a
Gap - national	44%	43%	41%	40%	n/a
5+A-C IEM CLA York	13%	38%	25%	20%	17%
5+A-C IEM Non CLA	63%	67%	n/a	66%	64%

York					
<b>Gap - York</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>47%</b>

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

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

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

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

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

Young people leaving care or who have left care receive help and support tailored to their individual needs and are provided with opportunities to enable them to move successfully to adulthood. There is a range of support options in place to enable access to appropriate education and employment opportunities, including work experience and apprenticeships and visible senior leadership regarding apprenticeships. More young people in the age range 18-21 want a second chance in FE / HE or want to try out independent accommodation. Four young people post 21 have asked to be supported in going to university and the local authority has provided support with transport and accommodation costs. Relatively low numbers of care leavers are NEET, though this will always remain a priority for us.

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

### **Other developments**

There have been many other developments over the past three years in the support for Children Looked After, including:

- The appointment of a head teacher of the Virtual School for looked after children and the proactive work of the senior leadership team. The virtual school has an overview of each looked after young person and the monitoring of the progress through key stages. It includes a part-time Educational Psychologist and a Connexions Adviser. The Virtual School now provides challenge around narrowing the gap, as well as engaging in greater operational work supporting children, young people, teachers and social workers. The school produces a regular self-evaluation and has an Improvement Plan.
- The New Deal for Foster Carers ensuring a vision for the future work of York's valued foster carers. 75% of York's looked after children are placed with skilled York foster carers offering placement stability and valuable links with their home communities.
- CAMHS Looked After Children's Service work with looked after young people, foster carers and care leavers to achieve greater placement stability.
- Improved work in the "edge of care services" through the Keeping Families Together commitment.
- Increased opportunities for leisure and cultural activities for looked after young people such as the All Together Active youth club for children looked after, and access to the council's sports and leisure facilities.
- The provision of support services from a new location (Hamilton House) has focused the contact provision for looked after young people and their families.
- A wide range of consultation mechanisms including: the YorOK Voice and Involvement Forum; the Children in Care council (age 14+), and younger sub-group (age 10-14); the U matter Survey; Speak up event; the Show Me That I Matter panel; and the I Matter Too panel. These groups have developed the *Listen To Me* video from the *Arts4 Care* project.
- The Looked After Children handbook.
- The Children's Rights & Advocacy service.
- The expansion of Independent Visitors.
- Improvements in Independent Reviewing Service.
- The renewed Pledge for Children Looked After (reproduced at **Annex C**)

## Annex B: The Views of Children who are Looked After

The 2015 U Matter Survey was rolled out between February and April 2015, to collect current views of children and young people in care in York. When informing senior managers about children and young people's views, the Speak Up Service take a "mosaic" approach. The U Matter Survey is just one approach within many taken to gather children and young people's views. The highlights from this Survey are as follows:

### PLACEMENTS

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

### SOCIAL WORKER

85% of young people knew how to contact their social worker when they needed them. Just over half of young people who participated in the survey (54%) didn't know who to contact when their social worker was off sick or on holiday; however this shows an improvement from the previous year as 71% of young people didn't know who to contact in 2014. 65% of young people said their social worker was reliable; this has dropped from the previous year when 81% of young people said their social worker was reliable.

### REVIEWS

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

### CONTACT WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

82% of young people said they feel they have enough help and support to keep in touch with friends and family. 84% felt they were given enough information about when, where and how often they would see family or friends. 18% of young people were unhappy about contact arrangements, (9 out of 51 young people). If ever unhappy about contact arrangements, 90% of young people knew who to contact to talk about this. These results are in line with the 2014 statistics.

### EDUCATION

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

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

### HOW SAFE DO YOU FEEL?

Young people were asked about how safe they felt at home, at school and how safe they felt in the area they live in. This was asked on a scale of 1-4, 1 being not safe and 4 feeling really safe. Most young people felt either safe or really safe at home, while 9% didn't feel safe. It is worth noting when young people

identified not feeling safe at home this was dealt with and the appropriate people were contacted. 92% of young people felt safe at school. 85% of young people felt safe in the area they lived in.

### **LEAVING CARE**

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

### **RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS**

In 2014, around half of the respondents said they were aware of Children's Rights and Advocacy Service; this year this has risen with 85% of young people aware of the service. In 2014, 74% of young people said they were treated with respect by people working with them; this has now improved with 85% of young people feeling they are treated with respect in 2015. 81% of young people felt they knew enough about their rights and entitlements; those who didn't were directed to the Show Me That I Matter website for more information.

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

### **OVERALL CARE EXPERIENCE**

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

**ANNEX C: York's Pledge to Children Looked After**

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**Annex D: Membership of the MALAP Executive at January 2016**

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