

City of York – Corporate Parenting Board

Annual Report 2023/24

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■ Introducing our annual report – Our Corporate Parenting Board Chairs

Lauren and Owen - Co-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board

Hi, we are co-chairs of the corporate parenting board, we sit alongside Councillor Bob Webb, chairing the Corporate Parenting Board meeting. Our role in the meeting is to help ensure all voices are heard, children in care, care leavers and professionals.

Being part of the Corporate Parenting Board provides a platform to express and reflect on issues that are raised and that represent the majority of young people in care and care leavers, such as housing, education, health and support. The role enables us to contribute, challenge and further understand decisions made by the local council that will affect children and young people in care and care leavers who access support and services. Having us co-chair the board shows a recognition for young people's voice and allows for an advanced look on situations being lived out by those in or those who have left care. The role has changed the dynamic and focus of the Corporate Parenting Board in such a positive way.

The voice of young people finally sits at the head of the table.

Councillor Bob Webb, Co-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board

I would like to open by saying thank you to all of the members of the Corporate Parenting Board who have worked so hard this year. I would also like to welcome new members to the board particularly from Health and the Department for Work and Pensions. In my first full year as one of the chairs of this Board I am really proud of how the board has transformed into a high functioning space dedicated to improving the lives for our Care-Experienced young people.

I would also like to thank my co-chairs who have use their lived experience, alongside their intelligence, excellent communication skills and attention to detail to really provide challenge to corporate parents in York.

I am pleased that the Co-production approach taken in developing 'Together We Can' was nominated for a national award, proving that York is starting to be recognised for the changes that have taken place in recent times. This co-production is also clearly evident in Wenlock Terrace, this space is coming into its own in supporting young people to stay in their community and the work that young people have put into making it a welcoming space is excellent.

Again regarding welcoming spaces I am glad that we have invested in a Welcome Centre which will provide accommodation and support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. We have also created a dedicated social work post to support their needs. This is exactly the type of approach that York should be taking as a City of Sanctuary.

It is excellent to see how Signs of Safety and Family Seeing are becoming firmly embedded in Social Work practise and this is really beginning to show benefits for our young people's wellbeing. This has been followed up with Signs of Belonging, an approach to support children to build their networks. Further to these improvements in practise the City of York Council secured funding to develop the Family Seeing approach further and recruit a dedicated Family Seeing Coordinator.

This year has also seen a review of our Fostering offer as a City and the results of this review are due soon and I know that this will be something to focus on in the next few months. In the meantime there is an ongoing recruitment campaign for new Foster Carers. Foster Carers are such an important part of Childrens' Services in York and they rightly deserve our thanks.

As a corporate parent, like any parent, I am really proud of our young people's achievements and I am very happy that the Virtual School has started to hold Celebration Events to celebrate these successes.

Earlier in the year we were visited by the Government's National Advisor for Care Leavers. This visit certainly has sparked a few ideas that are outlined in the main body of the report. The key points I'd highlight are that we are trialling subgroups of the Corporate Parenting Board in Health, Housing and Education to support progress in those areas; inviting the Department for Work and Pensions to join the board; developing a better housing protocol and recruiting an opportunity broker to support care-experienced people's journey into employment and training.

Finally, I am pleased by the attention that has been given to reviewing our local offer. By making this a more bespoke offer, tailored to individuals, we can more closely support young people to achieve the outcomes that they want.

As always I am incredibly proud to be a corporate parent and I am very proud of the work of the corporate parenting board this year.

■ The Corporate Parenting Board

We are committed to York being an effective, caring, and ambitious corporate parent and we will do everything we can to make sure that children in our care and care leavers receive the best possible care and support.

City of York Council looks after a number of children and young people who are unable to remain in the care of their parents. When a child enters our care, the Council takes on the a special role called 'corporate parenting'. This means the Council is responsible for ensuring these children receive the same care and opportunities as any loving parent would provide. A good corporate parent always asks, "If this were my child, would this be good enough?"

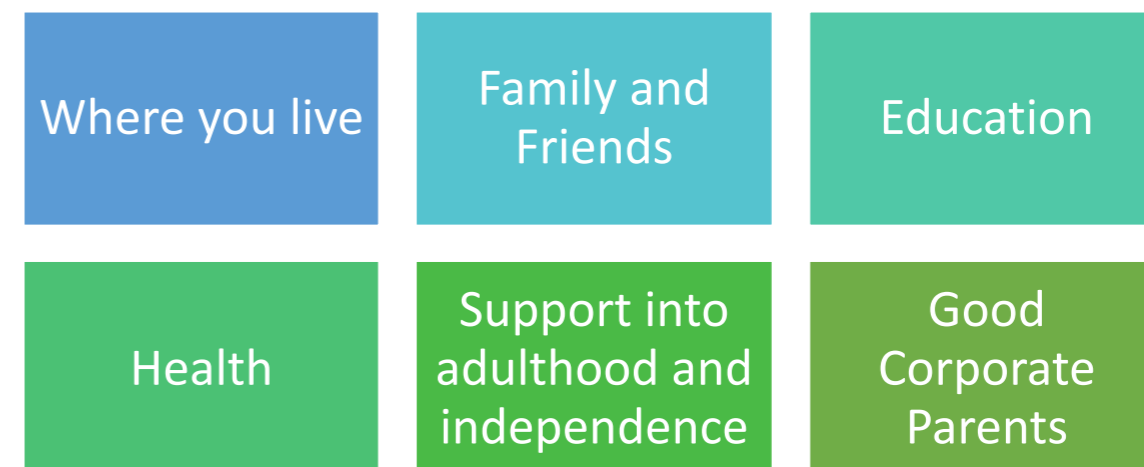
The Corporate Parenting Board leads this effort, focusing on the needs of children and young people in our care, as well as those who have left our care. The Board works with Council members, staff, partner agencies, and the children and young people themselves to champion their needs and ensure their well-being.

In 2023/24, a new Corporate Parenting Strategy was launched. This new strategy set out our goals for children and young people in our care and our long-term ambitions for care-experienced young people as they become adults.

This is the 2023/24 Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board. This report outlines progress in achieving the aspirations set out in the Corporate Parenting Strategy and the work of the Corporate Parenting Board in the last year.

■ Our Strategic Priorities

The report is grouped around the six strategic priorities set out in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.



■ Where you live

What our strategy says:

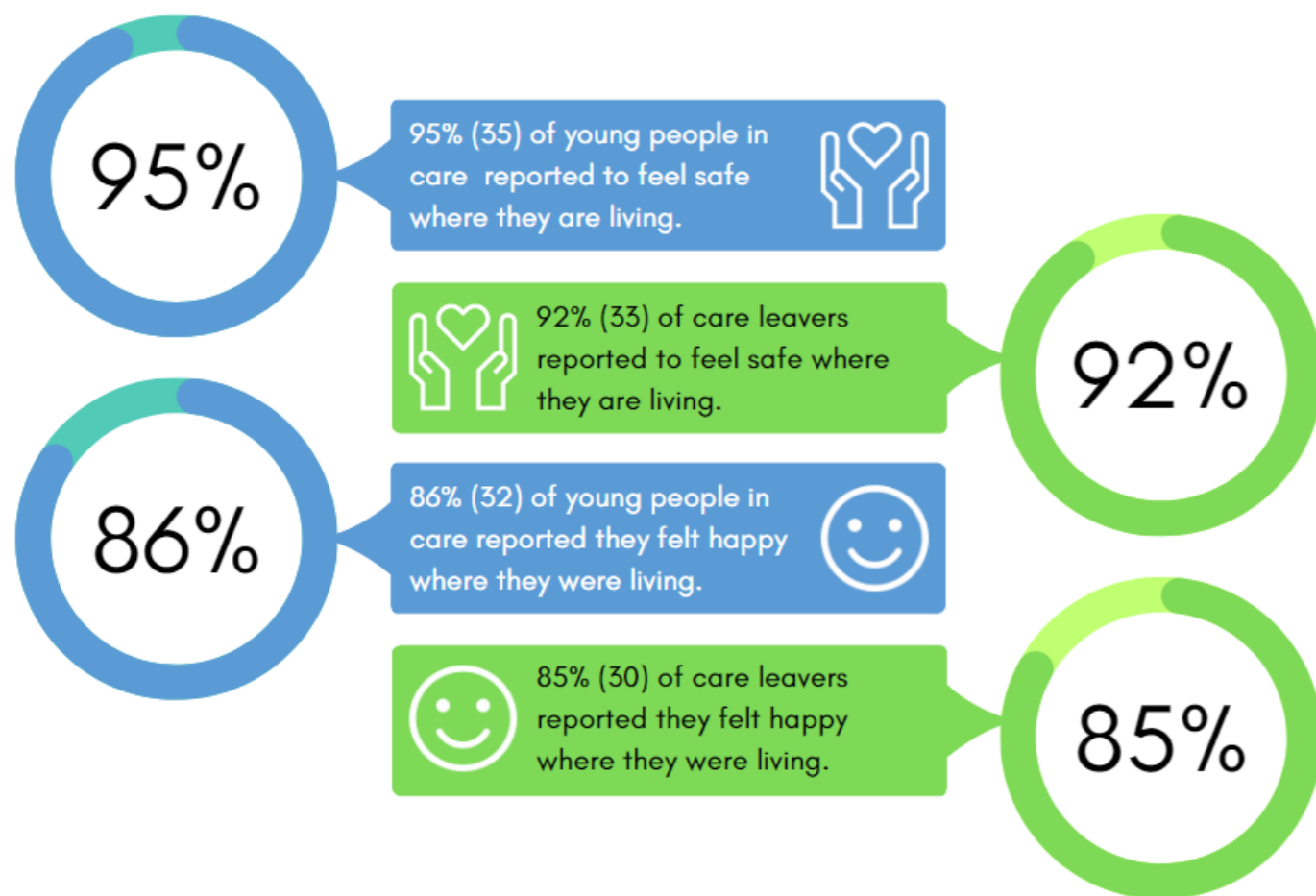
We will do our best to find you carers who will get to know you and help you feel safe, comfortable and cared for. We will listen to you so we can try to find you the right place to live.

We recognise the need to develop our Sufficiency Strategy so that there are more options for where children and young people in care can live.

What Children and Young People tell us

The Corporate Parenting Board received the findings from the U Matter report for 2023. The U Matter Survey is a chance for children and young people in and leaving care to feedback to the City of York Council about their experiences of being in and leaving care. The U Matter survey covered different parts of young people's lives including where they live.

The 2023 U Matter survey asked young people if they felt safe and happy where they are living.



Together WE Can

The Corporate Parenting Board reviewed the proposed development of Together WE Can. Together, WE Can is the service model for our new residential provision in York. This is a unique model that sees residential provision in a much broader context of how and why young people enter and leave children's homes. This will further strengthen our sufficiency to avoid unregulated provision going forward.

The Together, WE Can team includes a Clinical Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist, Police Officer and range of residential care practitioners who all work together with other agencies. We are also recruiting a substance misuse worker (in partnership with Public Health), who will work within this service in order to have a greater reach and impact.

Young people were heavily involved throughout the development of Together WE Can. Young people directly spoke at the Corporate Parenting Board about how positive the experience had been. Co-production with young people for Together WE Can was nominated for a national award reflecting the quality of this work. Young people have had extensive and authentic involvement in the recruitment of staff including for Together WE Can. This resulted on some occasions where there were different views on the best appointment and we consciously went with the views of young people.

Together WE Can represents an investment of around £1 million and is now open.

Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

The board discussed proposals to develop better support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) are children and young people who are seeking asylum in the UK but who have been separated from their parents or carers.

Our aim is that the City of York is leading the way in providing a caring, compassionate, and safe city for all young people. We are committed to ensuring that our core values are demonstrated through our actions by our response to providing accommodation and support that will enable these young people to develop into successful adults and who go on to make a positive contribution to their communities and the City of York as a whole. The board heard how we have been challenged by the lack of provision in the City, this has resulted in us placing young people in external arrangements.

As a result we have created a dedicated social worker post focused on the needs of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). This is alongside an investment of £275k to develop a Welcome Centre which will provide dedicated accommodation and support enabling more UASC to stay in York.

Fostering and Sufficiency

In 2023/24 we have launched our 'Foster 4 York' recruitment campaign and updated our sufficiency strategy (due for launch in July 2024). Alongside this we have invested in improving our branding and created a dedicated, permanent marketing role to support this work.

We launched a comprehensive review of our fostering service. This will include reviewing the current structure, our systems and processes, existing additional and 'add-on' allowances, payments and the fee/skill matrix and training to ensure that all foster carers are well supported and rewarded fairly.

There is a national shortage of foster placements in the country and we are seeing a record number of foster carers leaving the sector. This places a great deal of pressure on all local authorities and independent fostering agencies in terms of recruitment and retention. We are therefore competing more now than ever in terms of attracting new foster carers to provide homes for children and young people in York.

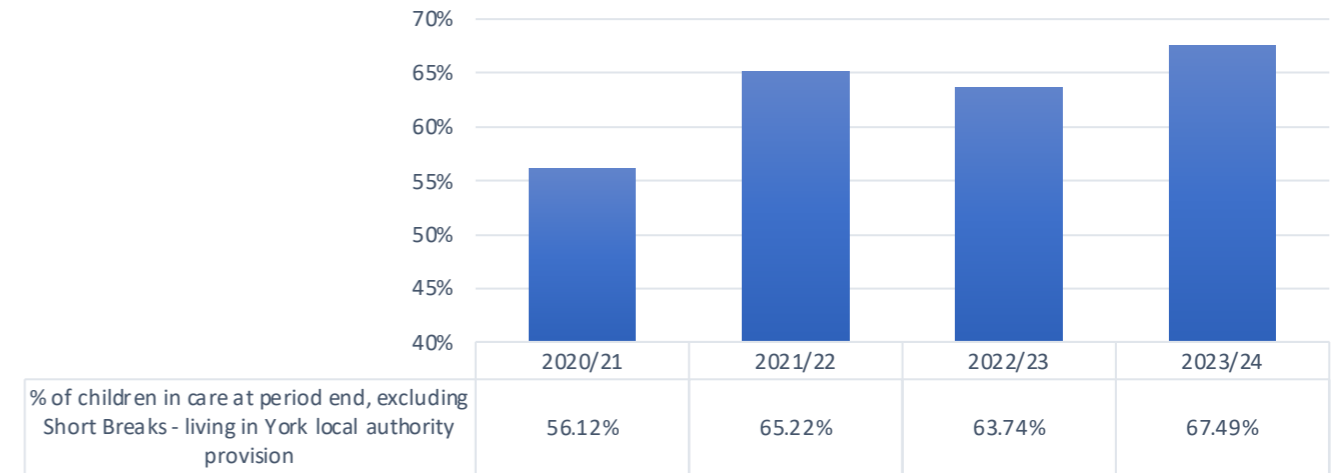
The fostering review began in February 2024 and was discussed by the Corporate Parenting Board. The input from the board is helping to inform the review as it progresses. We expect to have completed the review by September 2024.

Our Corporate Parenting Strategy said that we would want to increase the number of children living in York local authority provision and that we would improve placement stability.



The first graph below shows how the percentage of children in care living in York local authority provision has changed in recent years. We can see this has increased to 67.49% in 2023/24. This is an encouraging direction of travel and we would want to see the fostering review and new sufficiency strategy help improve this in 2024/25 and beyond.

% of children in care living in York local authority provision



We have reviewed all children and young people through 'Making York Home' to ensure appropriate plans are in place and independent advocacy has been offered to all young people placed externally to the City. This has resulted in some children moving placement where it has been identified this is the right thing to do.

The chart below shows the number of children in care that have had three or more moves in the last 12 months. This is a common measure of placement stability. This shows that the number of children needing three or more moves had been increasing throughout 2020/21 peaking in the first quarter of 2022/23. Since then there has been a gradual decline in the number needing to make these moves telling us where children live is becoming more stable.

Number of children in care with three or more moves in the last 12 months



Family and Friends

What our strategy says:

We recognise how important relationships are in supporting young people to thrive and become independent. We will work hard to support you to keep in touch with family and friends and if this is not possible, we will help you to understand why.

We will prioritise the development of positive and stable relationships between children and young people in care and their support network.

What Children and Young People tell us

The 2023 U Matter survey asked young people about relationships, family and friends.



Building Brighter Futures

We have made real progress in our journey to implement our 'Building Brighter Futures' practice model. This reflects a significant investment by the council in developing consistently good practice.

Over the last 12 months practitioners, managers and leaders have been engaged in a carefully designed programme of training and support. This has allowed us to make great strides in implementing Signs of Safety and Family Seeing. In March 2024 we launched Signs of Belonging. Signs of Belonging is an approach dedicated to supporting young



people by helping them develop their networks. The goal is to maximise the chances of reuniting the child with their family or placing them in kinship care, ensuring they stay connected to their family, culture, and important relationships.

Family Seeing and Family Time

In December 2023 we secured £297k of funding from the Department for Education to further develop our approach to Family Seeing and Family Time for children in care and care leavers. We have recruited a dedicated Family Seeing Coordinator who will undertake direct work with care experienced young people. Alongside this we are co-producing with young people a new approach to Family Time. The impact of these changes will be to support young people to see and develop the loving relationships they will need throughout their life. The funded project for Family Seeing and Family Time will conclude in March 2025. We will be able to report on this work in our next Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report.

My Care Plans

We worked with children and young people to redevelop and relaunch 'My Care Plans'. These were rolled out in March 2023 for all children and young people in our care. My Care Plans are designed to help children and young people be actively involved in their plan, including family time and planning their future.

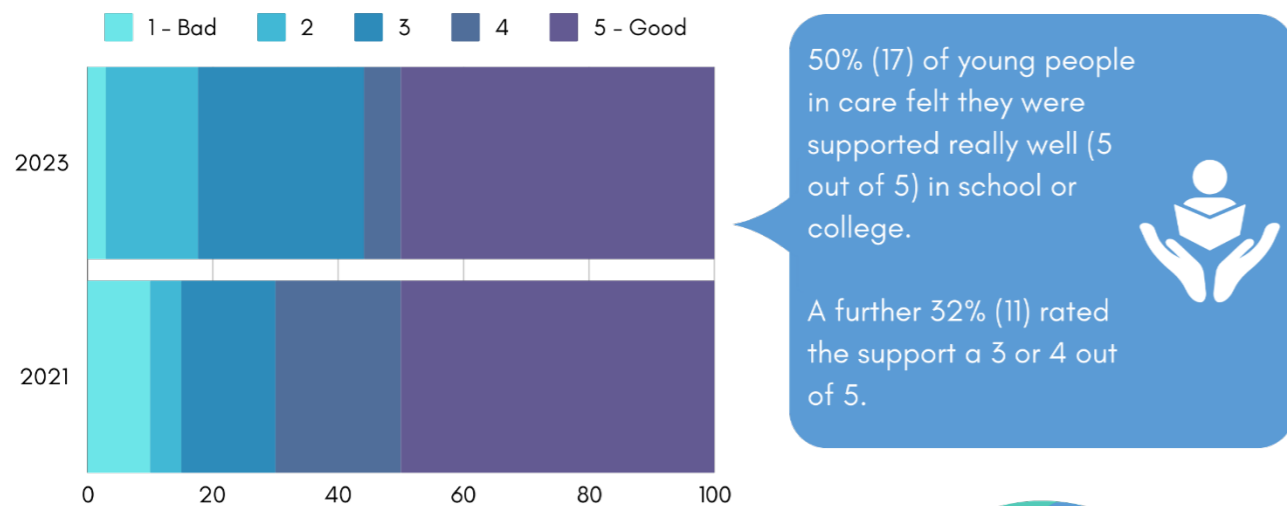
A dip sample has shown use that the quality of the plans reviewed was very good with some young people clearly sharing their goals for the future such as owning a private beach and a young child who dreamed of being in 'Paw Patrol'. The reasons they were in care was clearly explained and some lovely thoughts from teachers and carers helped make sense of what was happening. Our focus is now on embedding the revised My Care Plans into our ongoing reviews of children's plans.

Education

What our strategy says:

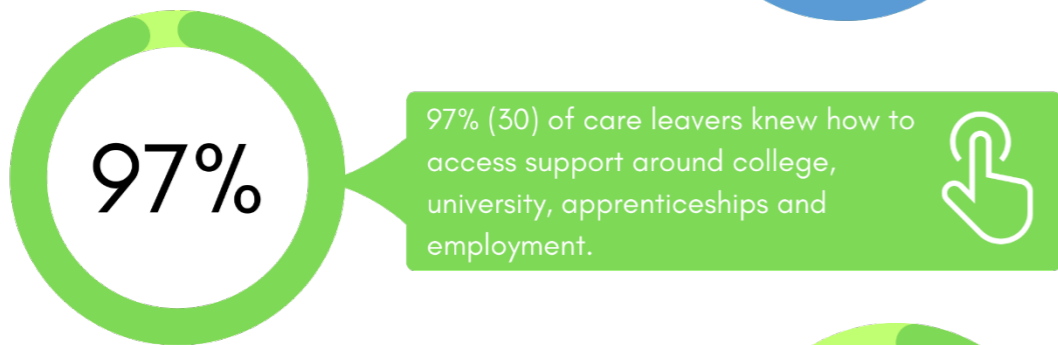
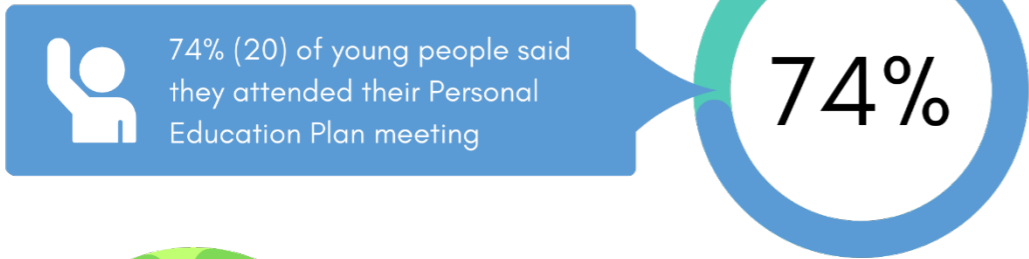
We will work to support young people engage with education that helps them to reach their potential. We want to make sure children and young people have a sense of 'belonging' in schools. We will also develop our approach to apprenticeships and access to employment so young people can realise their ambitions.

What Children and Young People tell us



50% (17) of young people in care felt they were supported really well (5 out of 5) in school or college.

A further 32% (11) rated the support a 3 or 4 out of 5.



The virtual school supports and challenges settings, schools, colleges and other professionals to improve the education outcomes of children in care by striving to close the achievement gap through targeted support and intervention when needed. The Head of the Virtual School regularly attends the Corporate Parenting Board and following the visit of the National Advisor for Care leavers we are creating an Education focused sub-group.

The Corporate Parenting Board reviewed the Virtual School Annual Report in December 2023. Key points from the annual report were:

- The Virtual School held a celebration event for the Class of 2023 - inviting all young people who finished statutory school (Y11), or who had completed Level 3/A Level courses in Y12/3 and who graduated from university. This was the first time the Virtual School has held a celebration event and it will become an annual event going forward.
- There is an improving picture of stability in education with less children needing to change school. There were only 31 children of school age who moved at least once during the academic year 2022/23 which is a reduction compared to the previous year when 65 children moved.
- All children and young people in care have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) from age 2 until the age of 18 unless they are in employment; these are reviewed termly by settings, schools and colleges and during 2021-22 all were quality assured by the virtual school team to ensure consistent application of standards.
- The electronic PEP system enables the virtual school to monitor the completion and quality of PEPs and allows for systematic application, authorisation and monitoring of PP+ funding for individual pupils. All designated teachers and social workers have access to this system and can contribute to the PEP process. This process is used to challenge schools to support pupils' individual needs. All previous targets must be reviewed in terms of impact before further targets are set.
- The consistency of PEPS is achieved through the quality assurance process which is the responsibility of the Virtual School headteacher and PEP coordinator. They read every PEP each term and provide a quality assurance judgment summary and feedback to the setting/school.
- Attendance during 2022/23 rose to almost 90% overall and is a reflection of the impact of the PEP coordinator role who acts as attendance officer for the Virtual School, working closely with designated teachers and social workers. The Virtual School Head and Head of Corporate Parenting meet every month to review support needs of any children with a pattern of declining attendance.
- Reducing fixed term suspensions remains a key priority for the virtual school in York. The virtual school Specialist Inclusion and Wellbeing Adviser and the Deputy Head of

the Virtual School meet weekly to discuss responses to schools and provide bespoke advice and intervention.

Raising attainment and improving the life chances of children in care is the most important priority of any virtual school.

- **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)** - Outcomes in 2023 shows that children at the end of the EYFS in York did better overall than children in care regionally and nationally. There were 8 children in the cohort in 2023 who had been in care for at least 12 months - 50% reached GLD (Good Level of Development) within the early years foundation stage profile.
- **Key Stage One** - Outcomes at KS1 improved on 2022, particularly in the Year One Phonics Screening check where 86% of the cohort met the standard. This is higher than the overall York average of 80% and compares to 65% regionally and nationally 61%. At the end of Year Two, 44% of the cohort achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths combined. Both these measures are better than regional (33%) and national (31%) data for children in care.
- **Key Stage Two** - Both attainment and progress at KS2 are improving however this is still a priority for the city. Results were better than in 2022.
 - o **York** – Reading: 31%, Writing: 56%, Maths: 56%.
 - o **Regionally** – Reading: 52%, Writing: 50%, Maths: 51%
 - o **Nationally** – Reading: 52%, Writing: 43%, Maths: 45%
- **Key Stage Four** – The overall attainment 8 score for the cohort was 27.9 which is higher than regional (23.6) and national (24.8). City of York attainment 8 score for all pupils was 49.2. The virtual school will be commissioning the support of a progress leader (independent provider) to add capacity to our team 45 days over the 2023/24 academic year focussing on improving outcomes in KS4 by responding to data from the PEP reviews and proactively maintaining contact with secondary school designated teachers in between PEPs.

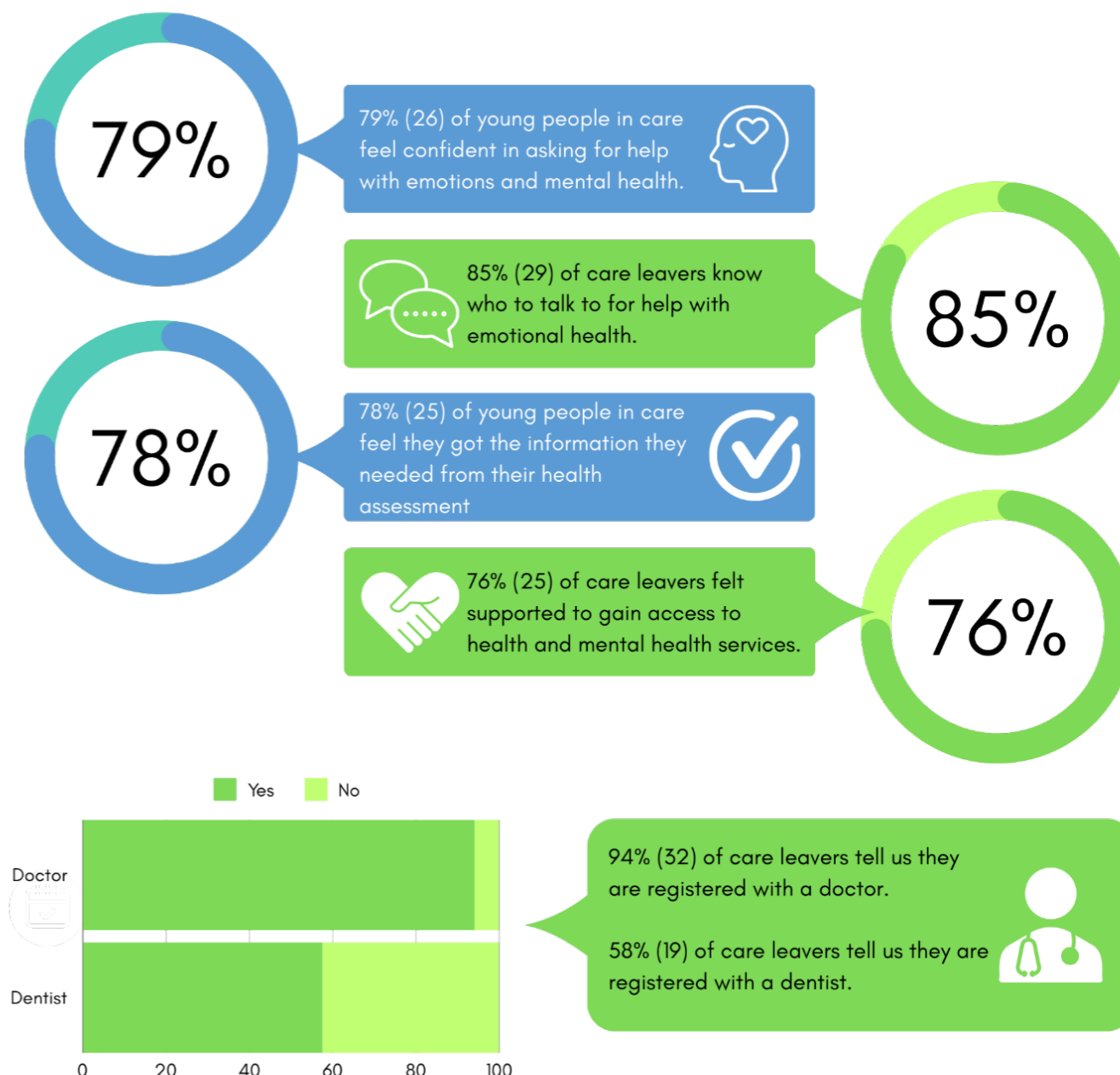
The Corporate Parenting Board received a report outlining proposals to improve the support for care-experienced young people to identify, apply for and take up apprenticeship opportunities. These proposals will now be developed towards implementation in 2024/25.

Health

What our strategy says:

We will work in partnership with health to ensure that the health needs of children and young people in our care are prioritised and met. We will do our best to ensure children have access to appropriate support in relation to their well-being and mental health.

What Children and Young People tell us



Partners from Health are now regular members of the Corporate Parenting Board. Following the visit from the National Advisor for Care Leavers we are creating a sub-group focussed on health. There are regular meetings with health colleagues including the Head of Healthy Child Service and the Designated Safeguarding Nurse where performance and practice improvements are monitored and discussed.

The Corporate Parenting Board had a thematic focus on health in March 2024. During this session care experienced young people, elected members and senior leaders from the local authority and health scrutinised performance and plans for improvement.

Health Assessments and Dental

In 2022/23 only 11% of Initial Health Assessments were completed on time. To improve this we have streamlined the process and introduced weekly oversight as well as monthly and quarterly reporting of performance. We have seen performance improve over the course of 2023/24 and in Quarter 4 29% of Initial Health Assessments were completed on time. Whilst we are encouraged by the improvement we want to consistently see better performance and this will remain a focus of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Performance in stronger for Review Health Assessments (88.8% Q4 2023/24, 100% for under 5's) and up to date dental checks was very strong at (94.9% Q4 2023/24).

Together WE Can

As mentioned earlier the Together, WE Can team includes a Clinical Psychologist – young people supported us in the recruitment of this role. We hope to begin to see the impact of having this specialist resource in place throughout 2024/25.

Alongside the Clinical Psychologist capacity within Together WE Can we have also established a consultant psychologist to work right across the service. Employed by our local CAMHS provider (Tees, Esk and Weir Valley) but dedicated to working across children's services the role will focus on formulation, trauma informed practice, supporting teams, practice supervision and specialist support to foster carers understanding and addressing trauma.

Staying Close and well-being

In April we secured funding from the Department for Education to develop our offer to young people leaving residential care. This funding enabled us to create a 'Staying Close' offer to better support, equip and sustain young people leaving residential children's homes into independence. Within the Staying Close team is a Wellbeing and Network Coordinator. Their role is to ensure that young people continue to have access to essential healthcare networks and support them to develop sustaining networks of support.

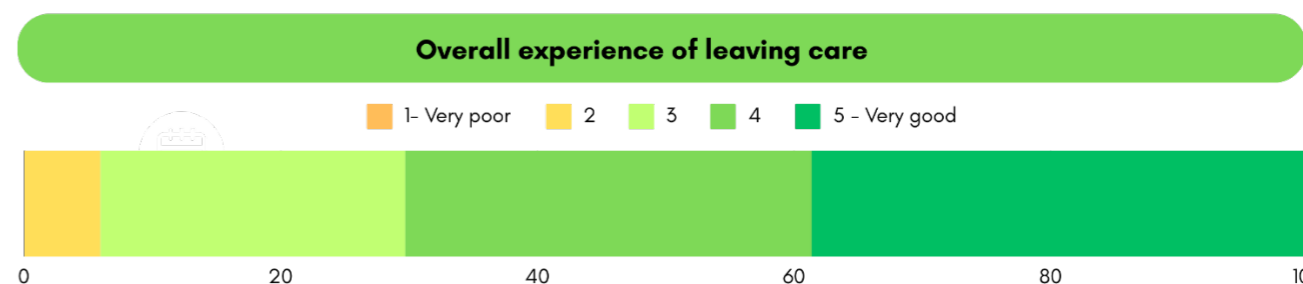
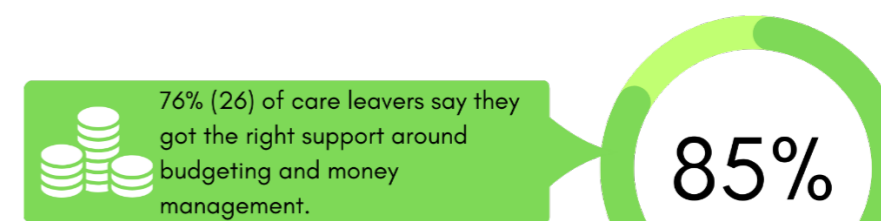
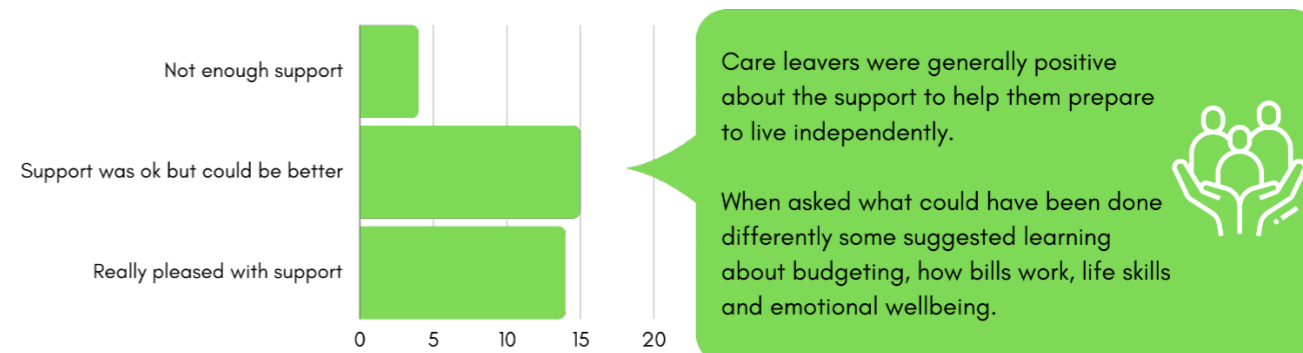
Support into adulthood and independence

What our strategy says

We will support care-experienced young people prepare for independence, developing essential skills, and nurturing meaningful relationships to empower them in their journey towards a successful and fulfilling life.

What children and young people tell us

Our young people are consistently telling us that the impact of the cost of living crisis has heightened and contributed to the deterioration of their emotional wellbeing. In every consultation and the most recent survey emotional wellbeing has been in the top three priorities.



Ofsted Focused Visit

In August 2023 Ofsted undertook a focused visit looking at arrangements for care leavers¹. We were really encouraged by the positive feedback given by Ofsted following their visit:

'Care leavers are very well supported by staff, with whom they have stable and trusted relationships. They are supported effectively into adulthood by workers who are emotionally invested in them. Care leavers are involved from an early stage in the decisions which affect them. They are helped to understand their rights and entitlements. Those who wish to become involved in service and practice developments are actively encouraged to do so.'

Senior leaders have created a culture across the council in which care leavers are valued and are given a high priority status. Senior leaders and members are strong and active corporate parents, who are committed to improving the lives of care leavers. Leaders value opportunities to engage with young people and understand their views and perspectives, treating them as experts. This puts young people at the centre of decision-making and service development.'

In particular Ofsted noted the feedback they heard from young people about their experience of being supported into independence and changes at the Corporate Parenting Board meaning they feel more listened to. The full focused visit report and a plan of action to improve further was shared with the Corporate Parenting Board.

Offer for care leavers

In September 2023 the Corporate Parenting Board provided feedback on the development of an updated offer for care leavers. Work took place in 2023 to consult and co-produce this new offer with our care experienced young people. Key features of the new offer are:

- A new approach to our local offer, moving away from a one size fits all to a more individualised approach especially for relevant and former relevant care experienced young people 16 to 25.
- Improved staying in touch communication with all care experienced young people 21+ by sending birthday and Christmas cards which includes key information around support offer & contact details.
- Being clearer about the offer to qualifying care leavers including access to the setting up home grant for essential items.
- Relaunching the peer mentor scheme.
- Promoting the MIND Counselling offer 16 to 25 which offers 6 free sessions for care leavers who live in or out of the City who are not in higher education.

- A new financial offer for relevant and former relevant care experienced young people 21 to 25 administered on an individual assessed need basis.
- Bus pass and out of area council tax for care experienced young people up to 21 who live permanently outside of the City.
- An improved offer around Council tax exemption for care experienced young people who live in the City up to 21- to exempt on a sliding scale over 3 years.
- A £25 contribution per month for 1 year towards broadband costs when moving into independence up to 21.
- Providing access to a wellbeing app in response to input from young people.
- Updating our offer for young people attending university.

Feedback from the National Adviser for Care Leavers

In December 2023 we welcomed Mark Riddell as the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers for a two day formal visit. Feedback from the visit recognised the progress that had been made in recent years – 'I was very impressed by the leadership and management approach that was ambitious, aspirational and I got a real sense of passion and commitment to have a better offer for care leavers across the whole service area. It was clear to see real signs of change such as a housing protocol, opportunity broker, a more stable workforce, an EET figure of 68%, a review of the local offer, a strong user voice, a no wrong door approach (Together WE Can) is being developed and a strengthening of your apprenticeship offer to mention just a few.'

Following the visit we have taken further steps reflecting on feedback provided:

- We have broadened the membership of the Corporate Parenting Board to include key partners in Health and the Department for Work and Pensions. In 2024 we will also begin to pilot subgroups of the Corporate Parenting Board focused on Employment, Housing and Education.
- We have successfully recruited an 'opportunity broker' who will work across the council and partners to develop a Workforce Strategy that gives opportunities to care experienced children and young people.
- We have updated the housing protocol so that all accommodation now has carpet and white goods and has been decorated before a young person moves in. A one-page document for young people to explain the housing protocol has been developed.
- We are developing a protocol that will help identify care leavers who would benefit from an Independent Reviewing Officer reviewing their pathway plan.
- Our SingleView system has been updated so that key council departments can easily identify where someone has care leaver status and ensure they are supported in line with expectations as corporate parents.

¹ Ofsted Focused Visit report 50227341 (ofsted.gov.uk)

- Young people are refreshing guidance and resources for professionals on using clear and accessible language. Young people spoke about the importance of language at our first workforce celebration event in 2024.

Employment and Opportunities Broker

As mentioned before we created a new role of Employment and Opportunities Broker as part our Staying Close model. The purpose of the role is to provide intensive support to young people leaving care and into independence by focusing on employment and training. It is an active, front facing role going into the community and engaging local businesses in York. We are really encouraged by the initial engagement from local businesses and will look to grow the impact of this role in the next 12 months.

The Corporate Parenting Board has considered a number of updates and proposals to support care experienced young people be ready for adulthood and independence. This includes an update on the work and support offer from the Department for Work and Pensions.

Support with the cost of living

In 2023/24 the Corporate Parenting Board supported the creation of a dedicated support fund for care experienced young people impacted by the cost of living. This was as a direct result of listening to the experienced of young people. A e-voucher scheme was developed and managed by the Pathway Service. Our young people told us that they wanted to reduce the barriers to applying for support without having to supply countless documents and information to evidence their need. As a result, we have kept the application process very simple. This is a strengths based conversation with a member of the Pathway Team to identify the area of need.

These vouchers could support with key costs around fuel, food, essentials and in exceptional circumstances emergency cash payments. The Corporate Parenting Board has been updated on the scheme and its use in 2023/24.

- In the first year of the scheme From April 2023 – March 2024 we supported our care leavers with 282 vouchers.
- This equated to £15,711 worth of support for over 60 individuals.
- 256 vouchers were used to support our young people with supermarket vouchers.
- 11 vouchers were used to support our young people with emergency cash payments.
- 9 vouchers were used to support with clothing and home items.
- 6 vouchers were used to support energy costs.

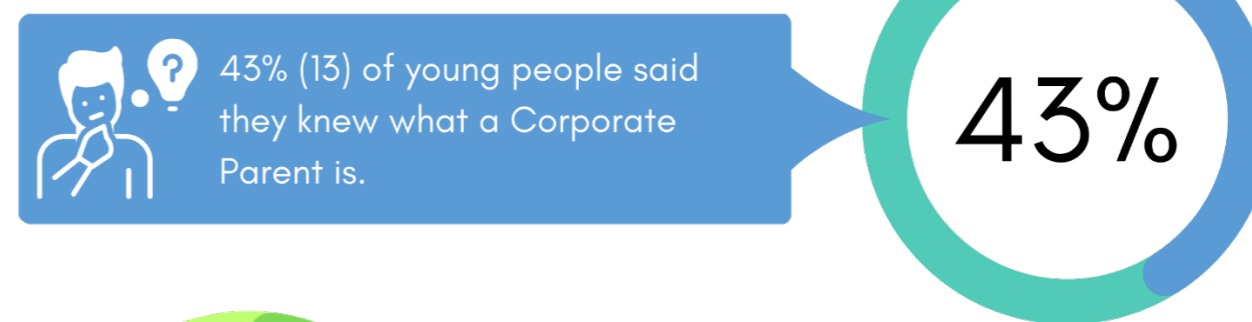
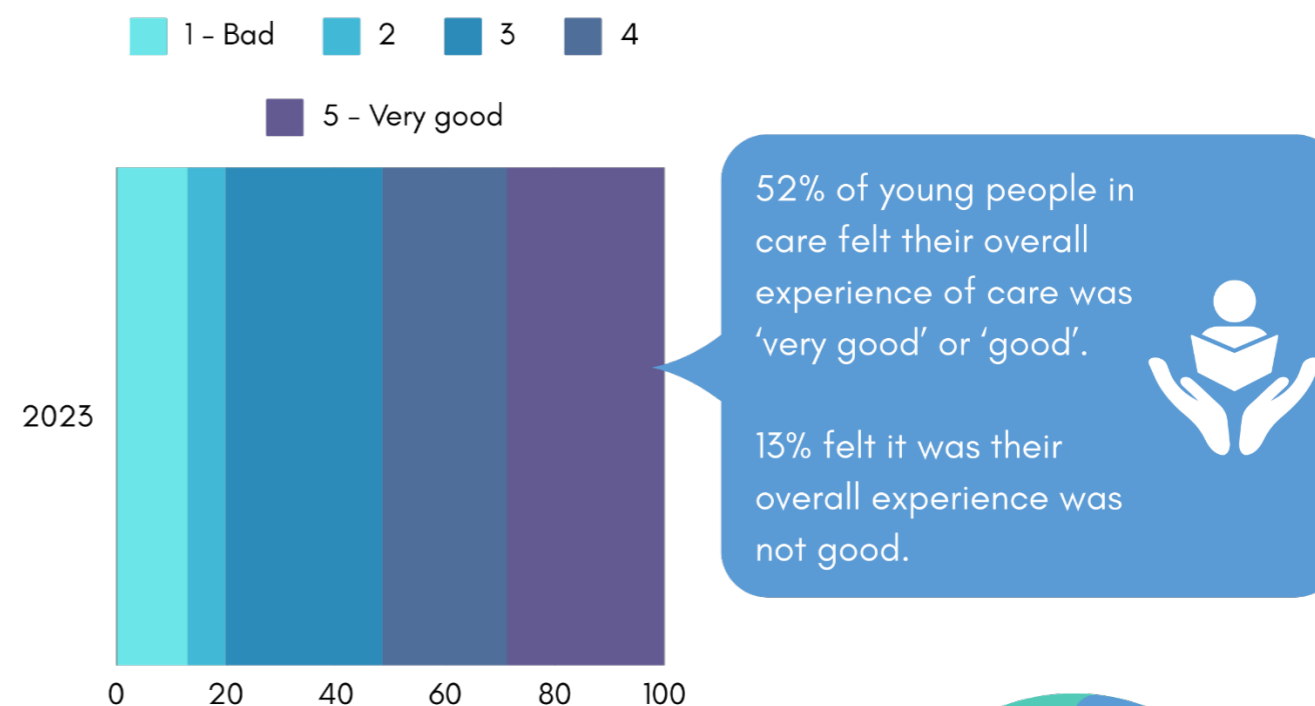
The voucher scheme is currently in place until the end of March 2025. It will be reviewed in 2024/25 alongside our wider support for care experienced young people to develop financial independence and well-being.

Good corporate parents

What our strategy says

Everyone will play their part in being a good corporate parent by actively fostering a nurturing and inclusive environment that empowers care-experienced young individuals to thrive. Our Children and Young People have a voice in the way we deliver our services and we will act upon what they tell us.

What children and young people tell us



The Corporate Parenting Board is committed to ensuring the best possible outcomes for children in care and care leavers. The Corporate Parenting Board agreed a new Corporate Parenting Strategy that was launched in February 2024². We have made great strides in recent years to develop our approach to Corporate Parenting including:

- The Corporate Parenting Board is now co-chaired by care experienced young people and elected members.
- The membership of the Corporate Parenting Board has been extended to include key partners in health, housing and the Department for Work and Pensions.
- We have secured permanent funding to support our successful model of Corporate Parenting Advisors.
- The Corporate Parenting Board has received updates directly reflecting priorities and feedback from young people. In 2023/24 these covered; protected characteristics, the local offer for care leavers and ‘Our Place’ (an ambition to create a dedicated space and support for care experienced young people).
- We are introducing three sub-groups of the Corporate Parenting Board to ensure a greater focus on health, housing and education.

There is a strong commitment right across the council to our responsibility as corporate parents. In 2024 the job descriptions of all Chief Officers across the council were updated to directly reference their responsibilities as a corporate parent. There is an ambition to go further and include this expectation in other roles right across the council.

Working together with care experienced young people we have carefully explored all options around making care experience a protected characteristic. We know that a number of local authorities have already agreed proposals to make care experience a protected characteristic with varying degrees of impact. Our work with young people has been clear that whatever our approach is it must be meaningful and not tokenistic. We’ve also taken time to explore together any potential negative consequences of making care experience a protected characteristic. This is an example of the Corporate Parenting Board working deliberately, over time, with young people to come to the right decision. In 2024/25 we will be taking forward through the council, and encouraging partners, to make care experience a protected characteristic. We look forward to being able to update on our progress with this priority in our next annual report.

As well as young people co-chairing the Corporate Parenting Board we know we have good opportunities for children and young people to share their views and help us design services. Show Me That I Matter and I Still Matter are the groups that make up York’s Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum. In addition we work together with young people to support specific projects, training, recruitment, regional events, national

² [Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024-2027 Annex A Corporate Parenting Strategy.pdf \(york.gov.uk\)](#)

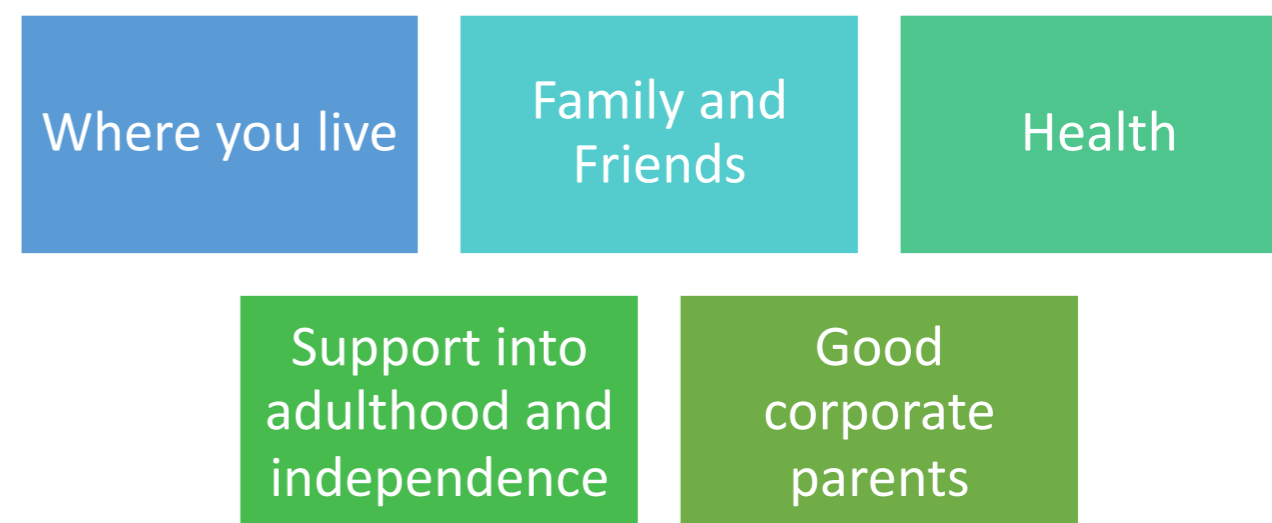
events and our now regular programme of celebration events. In 2023/24 over 50 care experienced young people have been supported to share their views through these forums.

Last year we introduced our new All Together Active group for care experienced young people that want more active and social activities. This is working as a great tool to introduce more young people into other participation groups. Below is a summary of some of the key themes we have been able to support young people to be involved in:

- The advisory group for mental health.
- Working with the fostering team on foster carer recruitment and training.
- Sharing experiences of having an Independent Visitor.
- Developing our approach to Protected Characteristics.
- Building on the work to further improve the joint housing protocol for care leavers.
- Input into the leaving care offer.
- The co-production of ‘Project Wenlock’ – our new residential offer for children and young people.
- Supported young people to share their views around the importance of language in sessions with all children’s services staff and the safeguarding partnership.

■ Looking to the future

Our Corporate Parenting Strategy and the views and experiences of young people will continue to be what drives our work. This annual report shows the real benefits of meaningfully working together with young people to be the best corporate parent we can be. In 2024/25 we will focus in particular how we can bring more partners to the table so we can deliver against our priorities as corporate parents:



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Publication date: November 2024

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