



# Looked After Children Strategy 2011 - 2014

Improving the Outcomes of our Looked After Children  
and Care Leavers

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# Introduction

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

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

As a Council we are committed to ensuring that every Looked After Child has the best possible start in life, is given help to achieve their potential and experiences safe and positive parenting.

The priorities in this document are drawn from what our Looked After Children and Young People have told us is important to them. It features the **York Pledge** – a promise given by the Council and its partners about the quality and nature of care that any child or young person can expect if they become looked after.

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

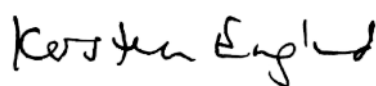
This Strategy describes the contributions of all partner agencies that are required to further improve outcomes for this group of children and young people.

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

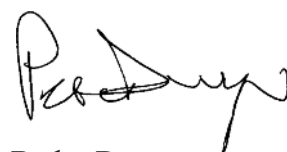
The strength of this document and the strategy it describes lies in the continued and active engagement of all our Looked After Children and Young People.

We are determined to ensure that this engagement remains a central feature of everything we do.

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



**Kersten England**  
Chief Executive



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

**Cllr Ruth Potter**  
Cabinet Member for  
Education, Children and  
Young People

# York's Vision for Looked After Children

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

We want our looked after children and young people to work with us, along with their parents and carers, in shaping how we manage and organise the planning, resources and services that support and care for them.

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

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

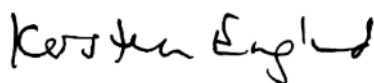
Our strategy invites us to work together with common purpose, putting the care of our looked after children at the heart of everything we do.

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

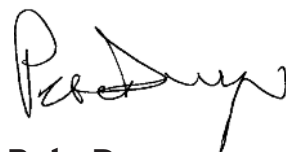
**City of York Council's commitment to children and young people in care, written by young people and endorsed by the Strategic Partnership for Looked After Children.**

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

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



**Kersten England**  
Chief Executive

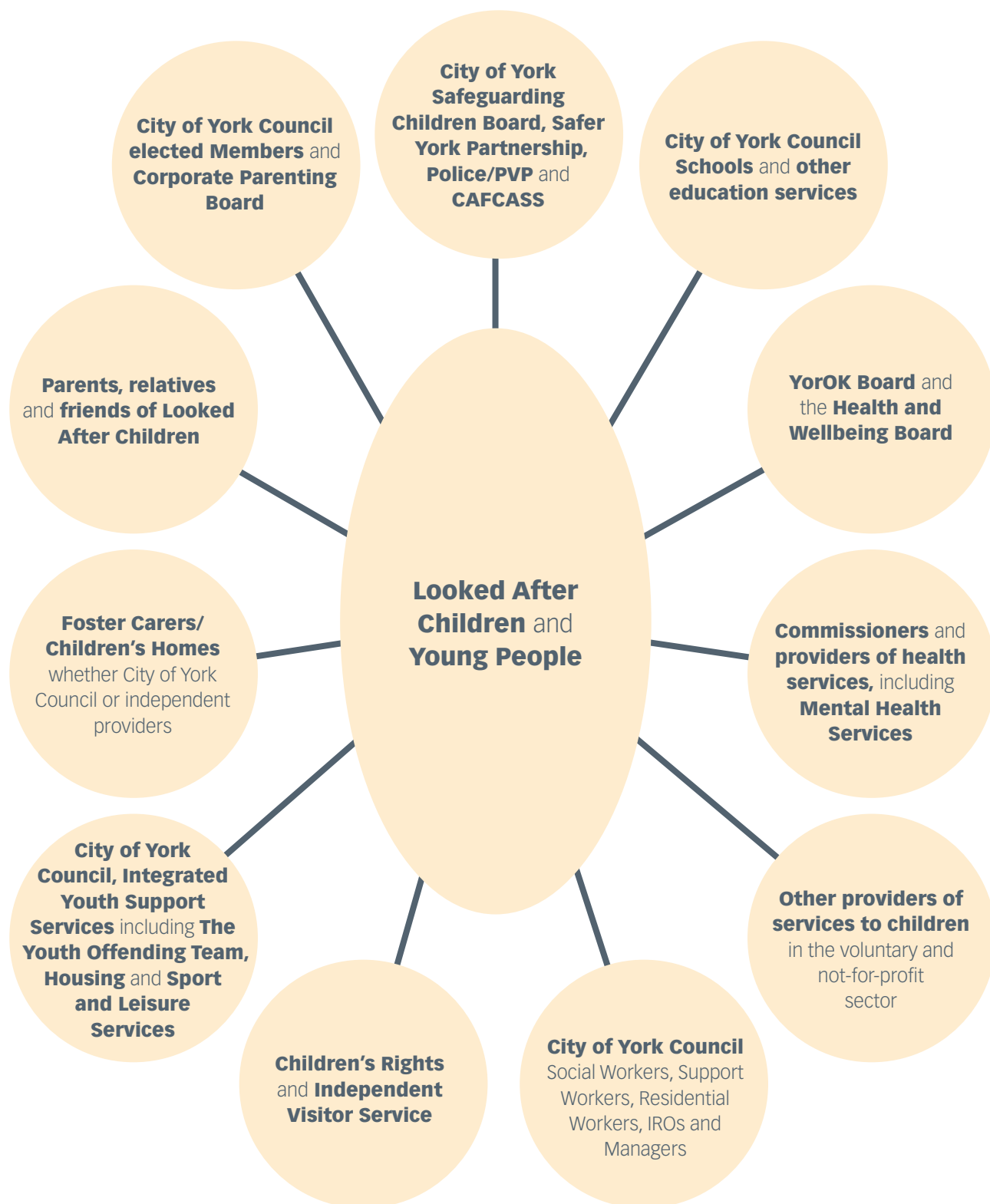


**Pete Dwyer**  
Director, Adults, Children  
and Education

**Cllr Ruth Potter**  
Cabinet Member for  
Education, Children and  
Young People

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

**Who Are We?**





# Outcomes for Looked After Children's Strategy

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

**These outcomes are:**

## **1. Respect And Involvement**

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

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

"We want adults to be respectful."

## **2. Good, Safe Placements**

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

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

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

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

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

## 6. Health

The health needs of children and young people are assessed and planned for, and they have appropriate access to all the health services they require. They are well and happy, and choosing healthy and active lifestyles. fulfil their educational, social and emotional potential, and to have high aspirations for their future.

"Looked after children need someone trusted to talk to in confidence about health issues."

## 7. Emotional Wellbeing

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

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

## 8. Moving To Adulthood

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

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

## 9. Corporate Parenting

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

"We want to know that we are important."



# Strategy for Looked after Children

## 1. Respect And Involvement

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Locally (CYC Pledge consultation 2011)

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

#### Locally (CYC Quality Assurance data)

- ▶ Only 17% of children and young people are directly consulted by the reviewing officer before their review.
- ▶ 98% of over 5s communicate their views to reviews-mostly by indirect means.

## What we have done so far:

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

## What we are going to do next:

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

## 2. Good, Safe Placements

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

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

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

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

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

- ▶ 94% children felt safe where they live.
- ▶ 90% children rated their care as good/very good-foster care is rated most highly.

- ▶ 83% thought they were in the right placement for them.

### **Locally (CYC Pledge consultation 2011)**

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

### **What we have done so far:**

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

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

- ▶ Produce an easy-to-share information sheet about each foster family, and Wenlock Terrace, to give to children and young people before they are placed, and offer an introductory visit wherever possible.
- ▶ Ask children to tell us about their experiences of their foster/residential placement, after they have left it, so that we can use this information to improve the service.
- ▶ Develop a robust system for setting up reviews at short notice in situations where a child or young person faces an unexpected placement move, or decides to leave care in an unplanned way.

## **3. Relationships**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Locally (CYC Pledge consultation 2011)

- ▶ Children and young people said worry about their family, especially what has happened to their siblings when they come into care, and aren't given enough information.
- ▶ They wanted help and support to maintain their relationships with family and friends while in care, especially when they change placement.
- ▶ They wanted contact arrangements to be made promptly, and to be explained to them properly.
- ▶ They were clear what they want from their relationship with their social worker, but said they don't always get this as their experience is very variable.
- ▶ They wanted foster carers who are honest with them, and act like "real parents", including taking them out more.

## What we have done so far:

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

## What we are going to do next:

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

## 4. Identity

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

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

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

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

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

#### Locally (CYC Pledge consultation 2011)

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

### What we have done so far:

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

### What we are going to do next:

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



## 5. Education

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Locally (CYC Pledge consultation 2011)

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

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

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

### What we have done so far:

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



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

### What we are going to do next:

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

## 6. Health

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Locally (CYC Pledge consultation 2011)

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

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

### What we have done so far:

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

### What we are going to do next:

- ▶ Appoint a designated looked after children’s nurse to coordinate and support the health assessment and monitoring of looked after children and young people.
- ▶ Develop and commission an integrated service for holistic initial and review health assessments for children and young people ages 0-11, through the planned Initial and Review Health Assessment projects, due to start in Autumn 2011.
- ▶ These services will be provided in accordance with the You’re Welcome initiative, which aims to make health provision more accessible and user friendly, and looked after children and young people will be involved in their design.
- ▶ Find out why some young people don’t wish to take part in health assessments, and how the delivery of the service could be improved for them.
- ▶ Put in place better arrangements for the provision of health care to young people and care leavers who are no longer at school, preferably by appointing a specialist nurse for these young people and offering them choices in how they access health care and information.
- ▶ Ensure that the timeliness and quality of health assessments is monitored and the results used to continuously improve the service.

## 7. Emotional Wellbeing

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

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

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

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

#### Locally (CYC Pledge consultation 2011)

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

### What we have done so far:

- ▶ The multi-agency Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) looked after children team provides children and young people with direct access to their service at the request of their social worker. Specialist interventions can be provided on completion of assessments.

- ▶ We have implemented the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) for all children and young people.

### What we are going to do next:

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

## 8. Moving to Adulthood

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

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

- ▶ To help with your move into adulthood we will support you with training, housing, managing your money, and will make sure that you have someone to talk to about the things that are important to you.

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

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

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

### What we have done so far:

- ▶ Set up a successful Staying Put programme, which means that the majority of young people remain with their carers beyond 18 and receive ongoing long term support from them.
- ▶ Taster and trainer flats are available for care leavers who wish to try independent living, though access to other types of supported accommodation is still limited.



- ▶ Young people can have a second chance to return to being looked after if leaving care doesn't work out for them.
- ▶ Established joint working with Youth Education Workers, Altogether Better and other agencies to run sessions for care leavers around budgeting, healthy lifestyles, etc.
- ▶ Effective use of Setting Up Home grants has delivered greater flexibility in meeting young people's changing needs.
- ▶ Developed a further education protocol to improve transitions from school to college.
- ▶ Established some Starting Blocks work placements-there is still more to do on this.
- ▶ City of York Council has established 36 apprenticeships, for which care leavers will have priority consideration.
- ▶ We give support to young people in training or with low wages, to provide an incentive for them to continue.
- ▶ The CAMHS LAC service runs a monthly drop in club for care leavers to enable them to access support with their emotional wellbeing.
- ▶ We have a care leaver in a Young Person's Participation apprenticeship in the Pathway team, working on encouraging care leavers to participate in social and leisure activities, and to contribute to service development and planning.

### What we are going to do next:

- ▶ Create more supported accommodation options, including some which can take young people with complex needs, including in emergencies.
- ▶ Ensure the sustainability of the Staying Put scheme by recruiting enough foster carers to replace those whose young people stay put.
- ▶ Develop a more consistent approach to preparing young people for independent living, by creating a programme that builds up their skills and can be used in a variety of settings.
- ▶ Adopt a more structured approach to the identification of young people's skills and learning needs when they are moving to independent living, and include this in the planning process.
- ▶ Use the new provision at Howe Hill to build on and develop existing links with colleagues in housing, education and the voluntary sector, to increase the education, training and employment options available to care leavers.
- ▶ Further develop the opportunities for care leavers to access training and employment within the Council, e.g. "employment with training", and ensure that HR processes are supporting the access of care leavers to jobs and apprenticeships.
- ▶ Clarify the process by which over 21s can access Pathway support when eligible.
- ▶ Put in place better arrangements for the provision of health care to young people and care leavers who are no longer at school, preferably by appointing a specialist nurse for these young people and offering them choices in how they access health care and information (see above, section 6).

- ▶ Ensure there is easy access to mental health and counselling services for care leavers and young adults up to the age of 25.
- ▶ The Pathway Team will put in place a system of exit interviews for care leavers approaching 21 years, and use this information to improve the service.
- ▶ Jointly with other agencies, create more accessible social, leisure sport and cultural opportunities for care leavers, to equip them to enjoy living independently.
- ▶ Improve the process of carrying out Pathway assessments, planning and reviews, so that young people understand, are involved in and value these activities.
- ▶ Develop the work which has started with the group of foster carers who look after teenagers, so that they become our partners in monitoring, developing and reviewing the service.

### 9. Corporate Parenting

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

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

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

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

##### Locally (CYC Pledge consultation)

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

##### What we have done so far:

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



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

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

# Delivering, Monitoring and Reviewing Our Action Plan

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

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

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

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

Progress against this action plan will be monitored quarterly by the Strategic Partnership for Looked After Children. The Chair of the Partnership will, in turn, provide a regular briefing to the new Corporate Parenting Board.

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

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

The overall Strategy will be reviewed in September 2013.

# Annex 1 – The Pledge for Looked After Children (long version)

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

### **What this means:**

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

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

**What this means:**

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

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

**What this means:**

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

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

**What this means:**

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

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

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

### **What this means:**

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

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

### **What this means:**

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

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

### What this means:

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



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

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

#### **What this means:**

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

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

#### **What this means:**

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

### **10. To help with your move into adulthood we will support you with training, housing, managing your money, and will make sure that you have someone to talk to about the things that are important to you.**

#### **What this means:**

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



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

**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 (Polish)  
własnym języku.

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

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

 **01904 551550**

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