

## Lancashire County Council

### Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 18th January, 2017 at 4.30 pm in Cabinet Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston

#### Agenda

##### Part I (Open to Press and Public)

No.	Item
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1.	<b>Apologies</b>
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2.	<b>Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests</b>
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Members are asked to consider any Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests they may have to disclose to the meeting in relation to matters under consideration on the Agenda.

3.	<b>Minutes from the meeting held on 7 September 2016</b>	(Pages 1 - 6)
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4.	<b>Improvement Board Update</b>	(Pages 7 - 24)
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5.	<b>Support to Care Leavers</b>	(Pages 25 - 84)
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6.	<b>Fostering Sub-Group</b>	
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(To Follow)

7.	<b>Work Plan</b>	(Pages 85 - 90)
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8.	<b>Urgent Business</b>	
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An item of urgent business may only be considered under this heading where, by reason of special circumstances to be recorded in the Minutes, the Chair of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency. Wherever possible, the Chief Executive should be given advance warning of any Member's intention to raise a matter under this heading.

9.	<b>Date of the Next Meeting</b>	
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Next meeting of the Committee to take place on the 1 March 2017 at 4.30pm, Cabinet Room C, County Hall, Preston.

County Hall  
Preston

I Young  
Director of Governance,  
Finance and Public Services

## Lancashire County Council

### Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 7th September, 2016 at 4.30 pm  
in Cabinet Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston**

#### **Present:**

County Councillor Gina Dowding (Chair)

#### **County Councillors**

Mrs S Charles	D T Smith
D Lord	C Dereli
G Gooch	J Gibson
M Otter	A Cheetham
M Dad	S Pryn

#### **Co-opted members**

Terri Hacking, Burnley and Pendle Children's  
Partnership Board

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Alice Marquis-Carr, Debra Wilson, Elaine Shinks, Micah Bimson and County Councillors Dr Misfar Hassan and Lorraine Beavers.

The Chair welcomed the following presenting officers to the Committee:  
Jane Booth, Independent Chair of the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board  
Louise Taylor, Corporate Director, Operations and Delivery  
Barbara Bath, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Residential YOT

#### **2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

There were no declarations of interest in relation to matters appearing on the agenda.

#### **3. Appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair**

**Resolved:** The Committee noted the appointment by Full Council on 26 May 2016 of County Councillor Gina Dowding as Chair and County Councillor Susie Charles as Deputy Chair for the following municipal year.

#### **4. Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference**

The Committee were presented with a report which set out the constitution, membership and terms of reference of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2016/17.

**Resolved:** The Committee noted the report.

#### **5. Minutes from the meeting held on 20 April 2016**

**Resolved:** The minutes from the meeting held on the 20 April 2016 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the chair.

#### **6. Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board - Annual Report**

Jane Booth, Independent Chair of the Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), presented the Committee with the Annual Report for 2015/16 which set out the priorities for the LSCB and areas identified for future work.

Members of the Committee were invited to comment and raise questions and a summary of the discussion is set out below:

A query was raised in relation to data around dentistry. It was confirmed that there was a statutory requirement for health assessments which included dentistry for looked after children and performance data from these health assessments was received at each Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) meeting. Committee members noted a request for further information on the monitoring of the uptake of the dentistry service for children and young people and in particular for looked after children.

Members were informed that in relation to interfamilial sexual abuse, a task and finish group has been established to look at data available from child protection plans and initiatives. In addition, the types of referrals and numbers of cases supported through Early Help was being considered along with the provision of training. The task and finish group would be reporting back recommendations to the Board in the New Year and it was also identified to organise an awareness raising campaign once this work had been completed.

The Committee were advised that, as a response to the recent Ofsted inspection, a review had taken place which identified the following:

- Adoption of a new approach to audit with the implementation of three virtual audit teams in three localities. In addition, there were plans in place to hold a number of multi-agency audits per year.
- A full multi-agency data set was confirmed to be in place and a Quality Assurance group established reporting to the Board.
- Further strengthening of the routine Section 11 audit (safeguarding) and enhancement to the challenge of those audits which would be done every third year to challenge evidence from the self-assessments.

It was confirmed that there was a national requirement for notification on female genital mutilation cases. This area of work linked to community engagement and there continued to be a need to engage better with communities to support this area of work.

There were reported to be ongoing concerns around Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The Health and Wellbeing Board had previously agreed to review the service but the Committee was advised that a wider national review of this service was underway. Members were reassured that the LSCB were continuing to receive updates on this service.

It was reported that as part of the Pan Lancashire review on mental health, there was a task group set up to look at vulnerable children and their different needs. It was suggested that there was a need for investment in research or alternative therapies to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy or medication currently available.

**Resolved:** The Committee:

- i. Considered and commented on the content of the Annual Report and identified actions to take.
- ii. At the January 2017 meeting, consider what information to be received around children and young people's health for the meeting in April.

## **7. Fostering and Adoption**

Barbara Bath, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Residential YOT presented the Committee with a report detailing the background to the Fostering and Adoption Service.

The report outlined the services delivered by Fostering and Adoption in Lancashire and provided information on the challenges faced by the service.

The most significant challenges continued to be the sufficiency of foster carers and the adoption of the more challenging to place children.

Committee members were advised that the marketing to support foster carers recruitment would benefit from a review from this Committee to identify other potential resources which could be used and how the influence of the Committee could support the marketing and promotion of foster caring.

Members of the Committee were invited to comment and raise questions and a summary of the discussion is set out below:

Members were informed that on average, people think about becoming a foster carer for two years before proceeding to the application process. In addition, previous marketing for foster carers was viewed to be more of a job advertisement rather than vocation but it was confirmed that this has now been revised in light of this feedback.

A query was raised on Activity Days and it was confirmed that although these are not running currently in Lancashire there are regional days continuing which Lancashire County Council (LCC) is linked into. In addition, the Adoption 22 group were reported to be organising a combined day at Preston North End for adopters and children to meet which was also being linked into.

Fostering teenagers continued to be a challenge. Workshops have been run within the fostering service for existing foster carers rather than as a recruitment exercise which was well received and remains a focus area.

It was confirmed that in BME communities, the proportion of foster carers and looked after children is reflective but this also continues to be an area of focus.

In relation to the issues around recruitment of foster carers, it was highlighted that the Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) have significantly better resources around the marketing of services to enable more recruitment of foster carers. It was also reported that they market an offer of better support although access to support is actually comparable to what is offered by LCC. But due to a lack of sufficient foster carers within the local authority, LCC are then required to buy in services from the IFA's where the costs are significantly higher.

A query was raised on the difference in payments from local authorities and IFA's to foster carers and members were advised that although agency foster carers receive an increased weekly rate, this was the only payment received. Whereas local authority foster carers were reported to receive additional payments for birthdays, holidays, Christmas etc. which assisted in narrowing the pay gap.

Members were informed that the numbers of children coming into care has increased which has further implications on number of foster carers needed. It was suggested that it may be of benefit to look at this situation in different ways by identifying additional support requirements such as a respite model or where there are those who would like to become a foster carer but unable to do so on a full time basis to agree to work and support young people to stay with family.

**Resolved:** The Committee:

- i. Considered and agreed areas for review within the Fostering and Adoption Service
- ii. Confirmed work to be completed by the sub groups on the marketing of foster carer recruitment and to review possible complementary services such as a respite model
- iii. To confirm nominations for the sub groups with Wendy Broadley

## **8. Youth Offending Team - Sub Group Update**

The Committee were presented with the final draft report of the YOT sub group.

**Resolved:** The Committee approved the recommendations outlined in the YOT sub group report – scrutiny spotlight review.

## **9. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities - Sub Group Update**

County Councillor Susie Charles provided the Committee with a verbal update on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) sub group progress.

A SEND Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 work plan had been formulated outlining the areas of focus for SEND in relation to the MCA over the next 12 months. A working group has been established with the first meeting planned for 26 September 2016. Anita Lindon, Mental Capacity Act Coordinator, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Team, Lancashire County Council was reported to be a member of the working group and would be able to advise and guide the work undertaken.

SEND have agreed to provide a copy of the updated work plan to the SEND sub group following each working group meeting along with copies of any other relevant documents related to this area of work. As part of the working group, SEND would make enquiries as to the progress of other local authorities in relation to the implementation of the MCA within SEND services enabling developments and process to be compared.

**Resolved:** The Committee noted that a further update will be provided to the January meeting and subsequently on a quarterly basis until the review is concluded.

## **10. Update from the Chair**

County Councillors Gina Dowding and Susie Charles reported to the Committee that they have met with County Councillor Matthew Tomlinson who has confirmed that he would be looking to attend future meetings.

There was reported to be considerable changes to the Child Sexual Exploitation staffing as a result of an internal review which highlighted a need for more staff.

Louise Taylor, Corporate Director for Operations and Delivery, confirmed that although this area of work was not highlighted in the Ofsted report, it was felt this was required from looking at national best practice and the growing level of concern in this area.

## **11. Work Plan**

Wendy Broadley, Scrutiny Officer, presented the Committee with the work plan which included the sub group work undertaken.

**Resolved:** The Committee commented and noted the report.

## **12. Recent and Forthcoming Decisions**

The Committee's attention was drawn to forthcoming decisions and decisions recently made by the Cabinet and individual Cabinet Members in areas relevant

to the remit of the Committee, in order that this could inform possible future areas of work.

**Resolved:** Committee noted the report.

**13. Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business declared.

**14. Date of the Next Meeting**

Next meeting of the Committee to take place on the 18 January 2017 at 4.30pm, Cabinet Room C, County Hall, Preston.

I Young  
Director of Governance, Finance  
and Public Services

County Hall  
Preston



## Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Wednesday, 18 January 2017

Electoral Division affected:  
(All Divisions);

## Improvement Board Update

(Appendix A refers)

Contact for further information:  
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### Executive Summary

This report is to update the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee on the actions that have been taken following the 2015 Ofsted inspection. Attached at Appendix A is a copy of the County Council's self-assessment report as part of the DfE Review

### Recommendation

The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee is asked to receive and comment on the report and the actions taken following the inspection. The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee is also asked to consider where it can add value to the work of the Improvement Board.

### Background and Advice

Ofsted carried out an unannounced inspection of Children's Services which commenced on 14 September 2015 and which lasted for four weeks.

The inspection focused on the experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. It also included looking at the effectiveness of our services and arrangements to help these children, including adoption and fostering. Ofsted also carried out a review of the effectiveness of the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board (LCSB) at the same time.

Ofsted published its report on Friday 27 November 2015 rating the overall effectiveness of the Children's Services as inadequate. The judgement for the LSCB was good.

Following this outcome a Children's Services Improvement Board was established with an independent chair. The Improvement Board agreed and monitors the progress being made in delivering an Improvement Plan. Appendix A provides a comprehensive summary of the progress being made to deliver the Improvement Plan.

## Consultations

N/A

## Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Improvements need to be made to services for children in Lancashire to ensure that they are safe and protected. If the progress in making these improvements is not assessed by the DfE and Ofsted to be satisfactory, the DfE has the power to make formal interventions into the way the County Council manages services for children.

## Risk management

The overarching risk is that children are not safe and protected if progress is not made to improve services.

## Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
Lancashire Ofsted Inspection Report	November 2015	<a href="#">Lancashire Ofsted Inspection Report</a>

## Department for Education Six Month Review Lancashire County Council Self-Assessment Report

### 1. Purpose of the report

In May 2016 the Department for Education (DfE) issued Lancashire County Council with an Improvement Notice to address all areas for improvement identified in the [Ofsted inspection report](#) that was published in November 2015.

The Improvement Notice indicated that the DfE would review progress against the improvement agenda every six months and that for each of these reviews the Council should produce a self-assessment. This report is the Council's first self-assessment and describes the progress that has been made to improve the services that protect and support vulnerable children. It will also outline the future plans and priorities for the Council and identify any potential risks in the delivery of these plans.

### 2. Context

There are four key documents that provide a significant evidence base and identify the areas to be addressed as part of the improvement agenda in Lancashire. The first is the Ofsted Inspection Report (November 2016) and this has been followed by the Lancashire Diagnostic Report (March 2016) produced by the DfE Advisor, the DfE Improvement Notice (May 2016) and the Ofsted Monitoring Inspection Report (October 2016).

The Ofsted Inspection Report detailed 17 recommendations, which are as follows:

Recommendation
1. Ensure robust performance information is available to support effective management scrutiny and challenge to poor performance at all levels of the organization.
2. Review the way in which audit work is undertaken and evaluated to ensure it is used effectively to drive improvement in the quality of front-line social work practice.
3. Ensure elected members have an accurate understanding of the quality of service provided to children to enable rigorous challenge to senior managers to make improvements.
4. Develop and implement a strategy that addresses the specific needs of the current workforce including ensuring the required levels of support and supervision for newly qualified staff.
5. Ensure that all child protection investigations are conducted by suitably skilled, knowledgeable and experienced social workers.
6. Ensure that strategy discussions are held when the threshold is reached, are clearly recorded, and that they always include the police and health professionals in planning and considering the outcome of child protection investigations.
7. Ensure that assessments and plans are informed by historical information and diversity factors and that they focus on the experience of the child and accurately assess risk.

Recommendation
<p>8. Provide all children in need with sufficient oversight from qualified social workers and managers to ensure robust care planning and on-going effective analysis of risk.</p> <p>9. Monitor and review the use of written agreements with parents to ensure they are not relied on to manage risk when a child in need plan, child protection plan or legal action is required instead. Ensure that managers' decisions recorded on cases files explain what evidence they have considered and on what basis their decision has been reached.</p> <p>10. In cases with an additional focus, such as forced marriage or honour-based violence, ensure that social workers understand the importance of also initiating child protection procedures when the victim is a child.</p> <p>11. Ensure that children who are privately fostered and their carers are assessed and visited within required timescales.</p> <p>12. Ensure that the need for permanence for all looked after children is considered at an early stage and is regularly reviewed.</p> <p>13. Ensure that all looked after children have regularly updated personal education plans that are effective in supporting their educational progress and attainment throughout their childhood.</p> <p>14. Ensure that the independent reviewing service undertakes consistent regular oversight of practice and care planning in children's cases in line with the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010.</p> <p>15. Ensure that managers of the service maintain a strategic overview of the experience of children from the point they enter care to adoption or permanency that is sufficiently rigorous to prevent drift and delay and assist with identifying and predicting future placement needs.</p> <p>16. Ensure that all looked after children who need it receive timely life story work so they understand their history and what has happened in their lives.</p> <p>17. Ensure that care leavers receive the level of support and information they require to successfully make a transition to independence, including accurate information about their entitlements; effective support in engaging or re-engaging with education, employment or training; and that pathway plans effectively address the key needs of care leavers.</p>

In March 2016, Tony Crane in his capacity as the DfE Advisor, produced a diagnostic report. This built on the findings of the Ofsted inspection report and provided further analysis and assessment of Lancashire's capacity and capability to make the expected improvements to services for children.

This diagnostic also made a series of recommendations that can be summarised as follows:

- To redesign the 'front door' and bring together the Contact and Referral Team (CART) and Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) through the implementation of recommendations from the MASH diagnostic.
- To remodel social work casework through the implementation of a more specialist social work model
- To make specific provision for the 'child in need' cohort.
- To build on the engagement in the New Belongings programme and make specific provision for care leavers.

- To ensure that standards and entitlements that have been agreed, are in place for newly qualified social workers, including caseloads, training and support.
- To ensure that all social workers have manageable workloads and that by October 2016 these are within the 'good' threshold on the Improvement Board Performance Dashboard.
- To provide assurance that there is sufficient resource to secure effective management oversight.
- To formalise reporting mechanisms between the Principal Social Worker and senior leaders in the Council.
- To ensure that audit actions improve practice and partnership working and are delivered within a framework of external challenge and support.
- To restate the vision and ambition with frontline staff and managers and ensure they are active participants in service improvements.

[View the Lancashire Diagnostic Report](#)

This diagnostic report informed the decision by the DfE to issue the Council with an Improvement Notice. This Notice identified the delivery of the improvement plan to address the recommendations made by Ofsted but also specifically referenced the following areas of focus:

- The need for robust performance management and audit information, which is used effectively to support scrutiny and challenge and to drive service improvement
- Management oversight, particularly for children in need cases
- Services for care leavers
- Issues which may hinder efficient processes for case management, including management structure and structure of social work teams.

[View the Improvement Notice](#)

In September 2016, Lancashire had its first Ofsted Monitoring Inspection under the new framework that has been introduced for how they will monitor children's services that have an inadequate judgement. The overarching assessment was that 'expected progress' was being made and the following narrative taken from the report provides some context for this view:

"The local authority is now showing some signs of making positive changes, as seen by inspectors on this visit, with evidence of change having accelerated since May 2016. Prior to this, it was too slow in improving its services for children and young people in need of help and protection and for care leavers. The local authority acknowledges that there is more work to do to ensure that services for all children are good. It has a comprehensive action plan in place that is being implemented across the service to achieve this.

The local authority recognises that while positive progress has been made against its action plan, this has not yet resulted in sufficiently improved outcomes for children, and that the current pace of change, combined with rigorous engagement by partners, must be maintained for children to receive a consistently good safe service."

[View the monitoring inspection letter](#)

### 3. What have we done?

Since the inadequate judgement by Ofsted in autumn 2015, there has been a strong commitment to improve services quickly and to ensure that children are safe, protected and supported.

A significant range of activity has been implemented and will continue to be built upon until practice is consistently good and outcomes for children are improved. Below is a high level summary of some of the work that has been undertaken to improve services for vulnerable children in Lancashire:

#### Strategic direction, leadership, governance and oversight

- **Director of Children's Services** – Linda Clegg has been appointed as an Interim Director of Children's Services (DCS) and provides additional capacity and significant expertise with a focus on children's social care. The process to recruit a permanent DCS has now begun with interviews taking place in November.
- **Improvement Board** – A strong, dynamic and effective forum to drive change and scrutinise improvement activity, plans and priorities. The Board has good engagement from partners and includes young people and social workers as well as the Leader, Lead Member and Chief Executive.
- **Improvement Plan** – Agreed by the Improvement Board in March 2016 and submitted to the DfE, the Improvement Plan has been recognised by Ofsted as a concise yet robust plan. It outlines what, how and when actions will be delivered to secure sustainable change to the way vulnerable children are protected and supported. The Plan responds to all concerns identified by Ofsted and good progress is being made and delivery is on track. View the [Improvement Plan](#).
- **12 week improvement plan** – The 12 Week Improvement Plan was developed to ensure a short term focus on key priorities and to ensure that actions and activity were being delivered at pace. The initial 12 week plan was completed on 31 August 2016 and given the success of this approach a further 12 week plan is being agreed by the Improvement Board. View the [12 Week Improvement Plan](#).
- **Children's Services Scrutiny Committee** – This committee was established in March 2016 with the purpose of ensuring effective political scrutiny of children's services. Because the Improvement Board includes elected members an early focus of the Committee has been those children's services that sit outside of social care and in particular Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Youth Offending.
- **0-25 Programme Board** – This Board was established in June 2016 to provide internal co-ordination of children's services change programmes within Lancashire County Council. The Board is chaired by the Chief Executive and is attended by the Lead Member and provides regular updates to the Improvement Board.

#### Remodelling

- **Three locality model** –The Council has moved to a three locality model in children's social care (north, central and east) and additional capacity has been agreed so that there is a Head of Service for each locality, providing strong visible leadership.
- **From generic to more specialist functions** – Each team within children's social care now has four discreet functions: child in need; assessment and safeguarding; children in our care; and care leavers. This minimises the number of different social workers a child may have but also maintains a focus on different cohorts of vulnerable children.

- **Practice Improvement Model** – To provide intensive support, challenge and direction in a geographical patch to improve the quality of practice. The model has started in the districts of Fylde and Wyre and significant resources have been agreed by the Council. It is intended that the model is rolled out across Lancashire with the programme delivered by October 2017 before Ofsted re-inspection occurs.

### Better understanding of ourselves

- **New audit framework implemented** – The audit framework was revised in line with Ofsted feedback using an adapted version that is well established in Blackburn with Darwen. 10% of cases are audited on a monthly basis and this is a mandatory role for all team managers, advanced practitioners, senior managers and independent reviewing officers. In addition, tier 3 audits are also undertaken by the DCS and Heads of Service. To support the implementation of the new framework a toolkit has been produced and training delivered to all staff involved. A key focus for the new framework will be to establish the discipline of systematically addressing all actions that are identified through the audit process and a tracker has been developed to monitor this. As the new audit framework starts to be embedded in every day practice further validation and external scrutiny is provided through an independent auditor. View the [Audit Framework](#).
- **Project Accuracy** – This project was developed to increase the accuracy of the data held on the Lancashire Children's System (LCS). A project board is chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive and has been key in changing behaviour and culture for how LCS is used by taking a small number of measures and through a weekly improvement cycle addressing practice and systems issues to improve the quality and accuracy of data. Newton Europe were initially commissioned to develop this project and now this has been handed back to the Council.
- **Improvement Board Performance Dashboard** – A set of key measures that have been established and agreed by the Improvement Board as one way of understanding the progress and impact from delivering the Improvement Plan. Data is produced monthly and rated against the agreed thresholds which have been determined through comparison with regional, statistical neighbour and national averages. The Dashboard is a standing item at the monthly improvement board with robust challenge and scrutiny through this forum. View the [August Improvement Board Performance Dashboard](#).
- **Improvement Performance sub group** – This group meets monthly with the purpose of scrutinising, analysing and better understanding the information presented through the dashboard and feeding this into the Improvement Board. The group is regularly attended by one of the three social care Heads of Service who describe how social work practice looks and feels in their locality and thereby bringing the data to life. The group is multi agency with representation from police, health, voluntary sector, safeguarding board, the regional social care information expert and is chaired by Tony Crane (DfE Advisor)
- **Practice Improvement Meetings** – These meetings take place each month in each locality to enable managers to better understand local performance data and agree a response to identified issues. Each meeting is informed by a monthly data report and a Head of Service leads the discussion, challenging managers where there is underperformance and highlighting areas of good performance.
- **Principal Social Worker** – The role of the Principal Social Worker (PSW) has been strengthened and is now far more visible with regular meetings established with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive. The PSW also chairs the Operational Improvement Group, sits on the Improvement Board and 0-25 Board, manages the newly established team of advanced practitioners and facilitates a range of forums and communication mechanisms, including a monthly blog to all social care staff.

- **Partner survey** – This survey was introduced to provide an insight into the relationship partners have with children's social care. The online survey received feedback from a diverse range of sectors and organisations involved in delivering services to children's with 126 responses in total. The survey was broadly very positive and highlighted some opportunities to strengthen collaborative working and also areas that already work well. View a [summary of the feedback from partners](#).

### Child in Need

- **Review of all cases** – An urgent action following the outcome of the Ofsted inspection was to review all Child in Need (CiN) cases to ensure that children were safe and receiving the right level of support. In total 2,345 cases were reviewed, with 16% of these being escalated into child protection and 26% of cases closed.
- **External validation** – Given the large number of cases that were closed as part of the CiN case review an external auditor further reviewed a sample of these cases to ensure that cases were being closed appropriately.
- **CiN Hubs established** – The CiN hubs started to be established in each locality from June 2016 and when fully staffed will ensure qualified social worker oversight of all CiN cases. All CiN cases have now been handed over to staff in the CiN hubs.

### Additional Capacity

- **Investment** – The Council has agreed that the improvement of children's services is a corporate priority and already over £7 million additional funds have been committed and allocated to support improvement activity.
- **Front door** – In June 2016 additional capacity was procured through a social work agency with the purpose of picking up a proportion of all new work and completing initial assessments. This capacity is still in place and has just been extended to January 2017 and is allowing staff to focus on existing work and reduce the backlogs of work.
- **Recruitment** – A high profile recruitment campaign that has been successfully promoted through social media and resulted in a total of 133 additional, permanent posts being filled. These posts include social workers; team managers; independent reviewing officers; Child Sexual Exploitation team; Contact and Referral Team; and business support.
- **Recruitment and Retention Strategy** – This strategy has been refreshed and implemented following agreement by the Improvement Board. The strategy includes learning and best practice from other authorities and has driven an improving position regarding staff turnover and sickness and a strong response to advertised posts.
- **Caseloads** – All parts of the social care workforce have shown reducing caseloads over the last few months. And these caseloads are now within the agreed thresholds that have been set by the Improvement Board as 'good' or 'outstanding'.

### Practice

- **Advanced practitioners** – 12 new advanced practitioner posts have been created with a role to drive improved quality of practice across the workforce. The types of activity the advanced practitioners will undertake and lead will include: reflective supervision; deliver training and individual support to staff; undertake audits; and provide support to newly qualified social workers - ASYE's. All 12 posts have now been appointed to, with some already having started, and the remainder will have started by December 2016.



- **Back to basics training** – All social workers have now engaged in the Back to Basics training. This training has established a clear and consistent understanding of 'what good practice looks like', and in particular the right balance between compliance and quality.

### Managing Demand

- **Risk sensible model** – The implementation of the risk sensible model has been led by Mick Muir (independent consultant) and the model is strongly based on the Professor Munro principles. Implementation has included the production of a toolkit, champions identified in teams, the model has been launched to staff and partners and training for staff has begun and will include early help. Plans are now being developed and have been supported by the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to roll out the model to partners to ensure a common understanding of risk.
- **Continuum of Need refresh** – Refreshed and launched in June 2016, the Continuum of Need has been updated by the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board to ensure the language mirrors that used in the risk sensible model. The model also been simplified and the threshold document has also been refreshed. The new [Continuum of Need](#) is now operational and over 760 people from all agencies attended the launch events.
- **Case allocation** – Weekly meetings have been established across the three localities between senior social care and early help managers to effectively manage step up and step down arrangements and to allocate cases.
- **MASH diagnostic** – The Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board led a review of MASH arrangements in Lancashire and presented its findings to the Improvement Board. Whilst practice was considered safe the diagnostic questioned the existing MASH model and suggested that effectiveness could be improved significantly. The LSCB is now leading a multi-agency response to the diagnostic, redesigning MASH to help to manage demand better through more effective engagement with partners. An assistant director from another authority has also been commissioned to provide additional capacity and expertise to support the development of this work.

### Staff/Partner engagement and communication

- **Monthly letter from the DCS** – A letter from the DCS is cascaded across all parts of children's services on a monthly basis and is used to update staff on all the key priorities and messages relating to the improvement journey. See [example letter to staff](#).
- **Improvement Board webpage** – A webpage has been established to provide a single place where staff and partners can access improvement information including regular updates from the [Improvement Board](#), monthly key messages from the chair and the improvement plan.
- **DCS staff briefings** – On a termly basis, the DCS hosts a staff briefing in each of the three localities to share key messages and engage with staff. A significant proportion of the time within the staff briefings is set aside for a question and answer session providing staff the opportunity to engage directly with the DCS.
- **Operational Improvement Group** – This is a multi-agency group of frontline practitioners who meet monthly and provide feedback and challenge to the Improvement Board. The Group, which is chaired by the Principal Social Worker, have ensured that decisions and plans for improvement activity are supported by frontline staff and also produced the [practitioners guide to the improvement plan](#). The practitioners guide has been recognised as good practice by Ofsted and has also been shared across the region.
- **Staff Forums** – Heads of Service regularly facilitate a range of staff forums i.e. with support workers, social workers, business support. These forums provide the opportunity for senior

managers to better understand the challenges faced by different groups of staff and work through some of the solutions and opportunities.

- **Team visits** – The DCS, Chief Executive and the Lead Member have undertaken regular visits with frontline teams and services. They have spent time with staff to understand the pressures they are working within and also to see how change activity delivered through the improvement plan is affecting frontline practice.
- **Multi agency focus groups** – These groups have been led by the health, police and education members of the improvement board. The purpose of the groups has been for improvement board members to better understand the barriers and potential solutions for better practice and then feed these discussions into the improvement board and plan. View [focus group summary](#).

### Young People

- **Improvement Board** – A key feature of the improvement board has been the involvement of young people and has included two care leavers sitting on the Board and regularly providing their views and perspective on Board discussion and agenda items.
- **Young people's improvement group** – This group provides a forum for young people from a range of vulnerable backgrounds to share their experiences and challenge the thinking of the improvement board. Specific activity that the group has developed has included supporting the young people that sit on the Board, delivering a session with Board members so that they could better understand the barriers facing care leavers and they are now planning a question and answer session with senior leaders, using social media to ensure widespread engagement from young people.
- **Professional Personal Advisor (PPA) training** – Care leavers has been actively involved in informing how the support they receive is shaped to their needs through the PPA hubs. Care leavers have also developed and led parts of the training for social workers and support workers through the formation of the PPA teams. Care leavers were also involved in the interviews to appoint staff into the PPA teams.
- **Care Leaver Apprenticeship** – A care leaver has been appointed by the Council as an apprentice to support the Improvement Board and is being supported to undertake professional qualifications in business administration. Following the completion of the 18 month apprenticeship, Natasha will be offered a permanent role with the Council.
- **Director of Children's Services appointment** – A group of young people will form an interview panel as part of the process to appoint a new, permanent DCS.

### Technology

- **IT Equipment** – A significant investment has been agreed to ensure that all social workers have a new SMART phone and upgraded IT equipment. Feedback from the Operational Improvement Group has indicated that this has been welcomed by social workers and there is evidence of how this technology is enabling creative approaches to working with families and capturing the voice of a child
- **Strategy discussions** – All social care offices have upgraded IT equipment so that where a face to face strategy discussion is not possible, partners are able to simultaneously dial into strategy discussions.

#### 4. How do we know we are making a difference?

The information below provides a snapshot of evidence that demonstrates that the work and activity being driven through the improvement plan is making a difference.

##### Performance Information

A key area of improvement that provides a critical building block to better quality practice is for social workers to have caseloads that are manageable. The average caseloads for social workers have been steadily reducing for the last six months and are now consistently within the thresholds for 'good' and 'outstanding' that have been set by the improvement board. However, there are still some pockets within these numbers which are higher than the average and need to be addressed.

##### Caseloads

Sep-16

Measure	Thresholds				Actual		
	Inadequate	RI	Good	Outstanding	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16
Average caseload per ASYE (newly qual)	>25	20-24	16-19	<16	18.4	14.3	17.8
Average caseload per SW (1-3 years)	>30	26-30	20-25	<20	22.3	19.1	22
Average caseload per SW (3-5 years)	>30	27-30	23-26	<23	24.6	19.3	21.9
Average caseload per SW (5 years+)	>30	27-30	23-26	<23	23.4	19.5	25.4
Average caseload per FSW & PA	>30	29-30	28	<28	20.9	22.3	23.1

The establishment of PPA teams has provided a focus of support for care leavers that is also showing good performance in the last three months.

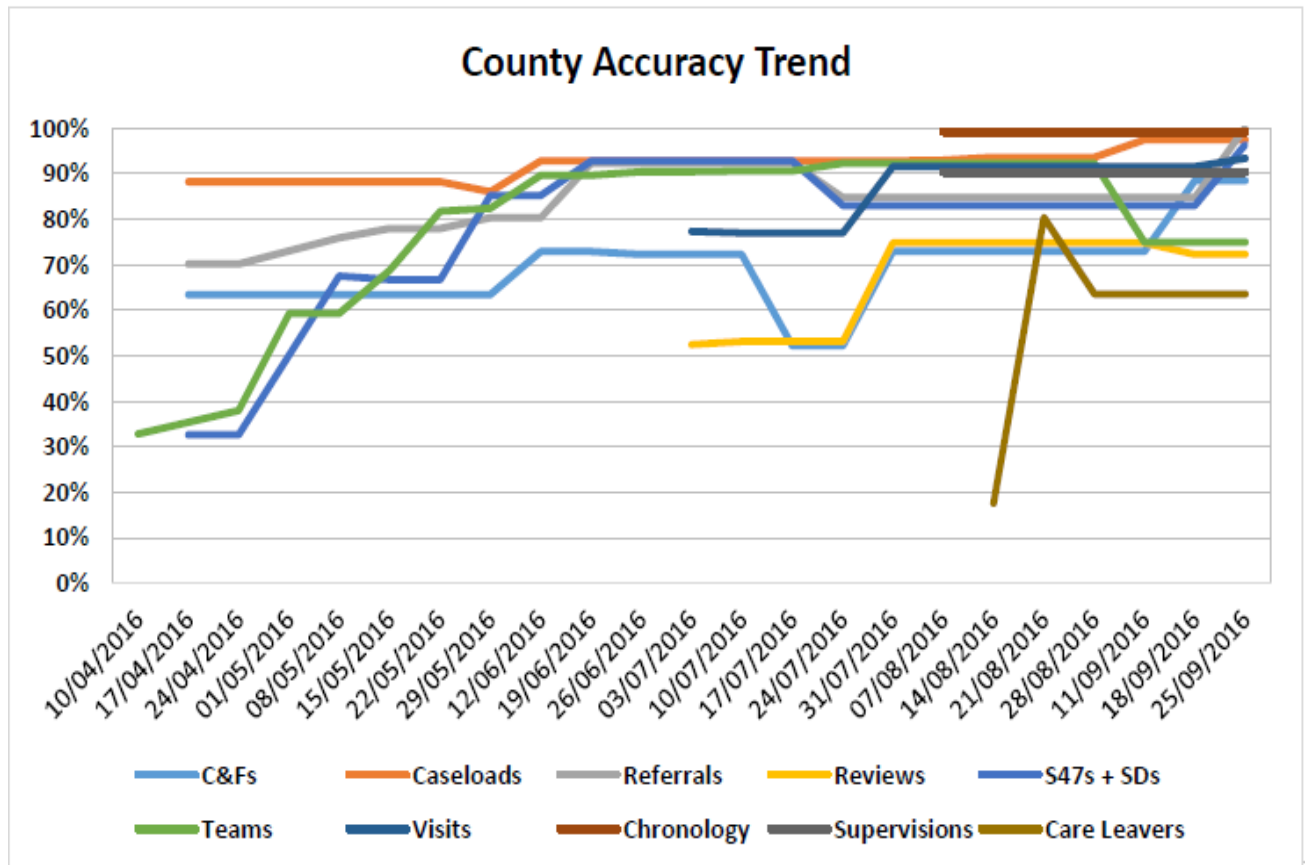
##### Care Leavers

Sep-16

Measure	Thresholds				Actual		
	Inadequate	RI	Good	Outstanding	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16
% of care leavers in suitable accommodation	<70%	70%-80%	80-95%	>95%	83.6%	90.0%	87.3%
% of care leavers who are in EET	<40%	40-45%	45-55%	>55%	41.2%	48.3%	48.2%
% of CLA who have Care or Pathway Plan	<50%	50-70%	70-90%	>90%	88.1%	95.4%	90.5%
% of care leavers with a Personal Advisor	<85%	85-90%	95-99%	100%	100%	100%	98.6%
% of care leavers that LA has had contact with in the last 3 months	<80%	80-90%	90-99%	100%	85.6%	95.2%	91.7%
% of care leavers who have been given an entitlements leaflet/booklet	<85%	85-90%	95-99%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The table below shows the week by week progress made in improving the accuracy of a key number of indicators through Project Accuracy.

A significant early measure that was identified for improvement was team hierarchies, which have now improved from being 30% accurate to being consistently over 90% accurate.



This graph shows the average accuracy % each week for the whole county for the different types of information.

The Lancashire Improvement Performance Sub Group and the Regional Information Group (RIG - part of the north west children's services sector led improvement approach) have both stated recently a satisfaction and confidence that performance information is increasingly accurate and providing a platform for more robust decision making and resource allocation at all levels.

The 2015/16 year end RIG report stated that 'the quality of data in Lancashire has demonstrably improved during the year'.

### Ofsted – September 2016 Monitoring Inspection

The report from the September 2016 monitoring inspection provided an overall assessment that the Council is making the expected progress and the Council felt that this report represented a fair and balanced view of the progress that had been made. Some areas that the report highlighted as positive included:

"Management oversight of casework through supervision is regular, but remains variable in quality."

"The quality of performance data has improved and is increasingly used by managers at all levels to improve practice."

"The local authority recognises that while positive progress has been made against its action plan, this has not yet resulted in sufficiently improved outcomes for children."

"There has been improvement in the involvement of key partner agencies in strategy discussions."

"Recent structural changes have strengthened arrangements for the oversight of practice for children in need."

"The quality of case recording, while variable, is improving overall in relation to the cases seen."

### Partner Questionnaire

Despite the challenging context in which children's social care are working and the significant change activity that is taking place the majority of responses from 126 partners (see below) are positive about the relationship they have with children's social care and how they work together. Responses were received from a wide range of sectors and organisations including health, police, schools, voluntary sector, residential homes and district councils.

Survey question	Strongly agree (%)	Tend to agree (%)	Neither agree or disagree (%)	Tend to disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
Children's social care is committed to making a positive difference to the families they work with	17	63	11	8	1
My organisation has a good working relationship with children's social care	20	48	17	12	3
There is good communication between children's social care and my organisation	10	25	24	26	15
Children's social care work well with other partners to ensure the needs of a child are met	6	50	22	15	7

### Staff Briefings

The DCS delivered three staff briefings in the summer term 2016 which were attended by 350 staff. Evaluations of these briefings have been very positive with 98% saying they left with a better understanding of the improvement process and 98% saying they left with a better understanding of service priorities. Other comments from staff included:

"First time feeling positive in a long time. Fantastic briefing - feel listened to. I now understand more fully why we do things and the reason for things happening."

"The future looks positive."

"I now understand more fully why we do things and the reason for things happening."

### Operational Improvement Group

The group, made up of multi-agency frontline practitioners, deliver a regular update at every Improvement Board and provide a test for how improvement activity is impacting on staff. The below are the headlines from the August 2016 meeting of the Group to the Improvement Board.

- Caseloads are coming down across county but there is still some pockets of high caseloads
- In the main ASYE have protected caseloads, however this could be improved
- Some practice may be risk averse and staff feel that too many care proceedings are initiated and legal advice is risk averse
- Morale in places is good but still patchy, the North, Fylde and Wyre faces particular problems hence the decision was made to pilot the single operating model there.
- Relationships with IROs are improving due to their increased number and therefore expansion of the role.
- Do we need a selection of respite foster carers attached to Edge of Care teams to prevent full admissions to care for older CYP?
- Caseload data may need altering to give a more accurate picture
- Health and wellbeing groups and initiatives are taking place but need expanding and embedding across the County

### Audit findings

The new audit framework has now been in place since June 2016 and whilst it is difficult to evidence consistent trends in performance over this relatively brief period, there are some areas where improvements have been made:

- There has been an improvement in the quality and consistency of audits completed, giving an assurance that we have a good understanding of the quality of practice, where we have made improvements and where further work is required.
- The majority of cases fall within the 'requires improvement' grade. This is consistent with external validation of practice including the Ofsted monitoring visit in September and the recent Peer Challenge (Sector Led) in October.
- Increased number of cases with a chronology.
- Incremental improvement in management oversight and timely decision making. This is consistent with the last Ofsted monitoring visit which highlighted that management was present and regular.
- Improved recording of supervision and case management decisions on case files, although there is still further work to do in this area.
- Increase in compliance in respect of statutory visits in CIN cases.

[View August 2016 Audit Report](#)

## 5. Key challenges/risks

There are some key and significant risks that will need to be managed effectively to ensure that improvement activity is not undermined and the pace of improvement is sustained.

- **Rising and more complex demand** – demand for services that protect and support vulnerable children continue to rise and in many instances the complexity of these cases is also increasing.
- **Quality of practice** – the initial focus for Lancashire's improvement journey has been around compliance. This has now progressed so that the priority is how we build on this compliance through the delivery of quality practice and that this quality practice is consistent across all work.
- **Outcomes for children** – the significant investment of resource and activity that is taking place in Lancashire needs to be measured in terms of improved outcomes for children.
- **Partners stepping up** – the local authority will not be able to continue to sustain the levels of improvement necessary in children's social care unless there is appropriate ownership and action from key partners in managing lower level risk.
- **Pace of change** – Lancashire needs to maintain and further increase the current pace of change to ensure improvements are embedded consistently and deliver quality practice and outcomes.
- **Management oversight** - further work needs to be embedded to ensure that there is strong and effective management oversight and grip, consistently across the County.
- **Front door** – Lancashire's front door, whilst considered safe, is not as effective and efficient as it should be. The local authority spends far too much time assessing new work that is then judged not to meet statutory thresholds.
- **Additional capacity** – one of the reasons that caseloads are now manageable for social workers is because a social work agency has been in place since June 2016, managing a proportion of all new cases. This additional capacity will end in January 2017.
- **Children in Need Hubs** – whilst arrangements have been put in place to improve the qualified social worker oversight of CiN cases this model will need to evolve further to ensure a robust and effective approach to working with this cohort of children.

## 6. Future Priorities

Whilst the focus for all improvement activity will be through the delivery of the improvement plan, there are a number of specific and critical priorities within this that will shape Lancashire's improvement journey in the next few months. In summary, these are as follows:

- **Front Door** – review, redesign and implementation of new arrangements that bring together the Contact and Referral Team/Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub. To ensure a more effective front door, with strong multi agency participation ensuring robust and efficient information sharing and decision making, that leads to the right response for children and families.
- **Practice Improvement Model** – the roll out of an intensive programme of support, training, quality assurance and resources that will focus on three key themes: quality of practice; management oversight; and outcomes for children. Driven and supported through the establishment of a programme team, governance arrangements through the Improvement Board and measurement

against clearly defined metrics. A key feature of the model will be the significant engagement with staff and partners to establish new and improved ways of working and the measurement of the impact of these on children and families.

- **Demand Management** - to develop a detailed understanding of the demand across key parts of children's services that are working with vulnerable children. To take this learning and agree and implement new approaches and ways of working that form a coherent strategy for how we better manage demand coming into and across residential, fostering and adoption services.
- **Child in Need Hubs** – to review the newly established Child in Need hubs, building and refining our approach to ensure vulnerable children are effectively supported and strong management oversight is evident.
- **Risk Sensible Model** – continue the roll out, implementation and embedding of the risk sensible model across all parts of the children's services to ensure a clear and consistent approach to identifying risk and then managing that risk through appropriate and robust decision making. Then further extending this model, through the support of the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board, to partner agencies and organisations that enables a common understanding and language across the partnership in relation to risk.
- **Early Help** – to continue to build the working relationship between early help and social care and trial the new early help operating model in the Lancaster district. Working with children with complex needs on level 2 of the Continuum of Need, the trial will be used to evidence the impact of the delivery of early help services and specifically to measure how this reduces the escalation of cases in to social care.
- **12 week improvement plan** – continue to focus the pace of improvement through new iterations of the 12 week improvement plan that provide a focus on a small number of priorities being delivered within a challenging, short-term timeframe.



### Links to key documents

Item	Title
1.	<a href="#">Ofsted Inspection Report – November 2015</a>
2.	<a href="#">DfE Diagnostic Report – March 2016</a>
3.	<a href="#">DfE Improvement Notice</a>
4.	<a href="#">Ofsted Monitoring Inspection Letter – Oct 2016</a>
5.	<a href="#">Lancashire Children's Services Improvement Plan – March 2016</a>
6.	<a href="#">12 Week Improvement Plan – June 2016</a>
7.	<a href="#">LCC Audit Framework – May 2016</a>
8.	<a href="#">Improvement Board Performance Dashboard – August 2016</a>
9.	<a href="#">Children's Social Care Partner Survey – June 2016</a>
10.	<a href="#">Lancashire Continuum of Need</a>
11.	<a href="#">Linda Clegg – monthly staff letter – October 2016</a>
12.	<a href="#">Improvement Board webpage</a>
13.	<a href="#">Practitioners Guide to the Improvement Plan</a>
14.	<a href="#">Multi Agency Focus Groups: key themes – August 2016</a>
15.	<a href="#">Audit Report – August 2016</a>



## Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Wednesday, 18 January 2017

Electoral Division affected:  
(All Divisions);

### Support to Care Leavers

(Appendix A refers)

Contact for further information:

Tony Morrissey, Tel: 01772 532276, Deputy Director of Children's Services

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#### Executive Summary

This report outlines what social, emotional and practical support is provided to care leavers and what action has been taken following the Ofsted inspection in September/October 2015 which found services to care leavers to be inadequate. It outlines the change in service delivery with the development of a discrete service/teams for care leavers and provides an outline of ongoing work to continue to improve services to care leavers. The report also provides information on improved performance against national performance indicators and again outlines plans in place for continued improvement and the role of the local authority as corporate parents and how it is exercising this function.

#### Recommendation

The committee is asked to note the actions taken since the Ofsted inspection and the improvements made. It is furthermore asked to agree its commitment to the care leavers pledge and their role as corporate parents in promoting the welfare of care leavers

#### Background and Advice

It was acknowledged prior to the Ofsted inspection by Children's Social Care Senior Management Team that services to Care Leavers needed improving. As a result it engaged in phase 2 of the New Belongings Programme in March 2015, with this concluding in March 2016.

The New Belongings programme set out 5 core components to achieve its aims in improving services and outcomes to care leavers. These being:

1. **Survey local care leavers to understand priorities of improvement** – 101 care leavers in Lancashire completed the questionnaire, the returns highlighted a number of improvements needed such as better preparation for leaving care, information on Rights and Entitlements, better access to their leaving care workers Personal Advisers (PA's) and support.

We have responded to the above survey and Ofsted findings by

- Developing a county resource for 'Independent Living', which is being piloted over the next 3 months and is to be launched in April 2017. Care leavers have been consulted throughout and are members of the working group that is developing this resource.
  - Rights and Entitlements guide was provided to all care leavers following the inspection. However, it was identified that this needed to be updated and to look at better ways on ensuring this information gets to care leavers which is easy to access. Care leavers have been consulted throughout and have taken part in the development of the new guide, which is being launched in March 2017. The draft was shared at a recent Corporate Parenting Board Meeting to again get their initial feedback which was positive. An Elected Member from the Corporate Parenting Board was involved in the development day with care leavers looking at how easy it was to access relevant information. This has led to the proposed website which is being developed which will hold all the necessary information to inform care leavers.
  - We have created three Professional Personal Adviser (PPA) teams, which is a discrete service for care leavers. Previously Personal Advisers held generic caseloads which included children in need and child protection cases as well as care leavers. All workers have attended training specifically on Care Leaver legislation, policy and procedures. Care Leavers have also facilitated in delivering this training. We are exploring the possibility of co-location with Housing colleagues to further offer a more effective and co-ordinated service.
  - We are developing a care leaver mentoring scheme. There are two schemes being progressed. One is an LCC staff scheme and the other is a collaboration with UCLAN students which will provide care leavers with better access to support.
2. **Conduct a review of the role of the Personal Advisers** - As outlined above three PPA teams have been created, North, Central and East. All workers including social workers in the PPA teams and Social workers in the Children in Our Care (CIOC) teams have attended care leaver training focusing on policy, procedure and Rights and Entitlements. As outlined care leavers have also facilitated in delivering this training. This has provided care leavers with better support.
  3. **Establish a forum of care leavers to help the authority in shaping decisions about changes to services** - Lancashire now have a care leaver forum which meets on a monthly bases, over the last 12 months the forum have been consulted and help develop the Rights and Entitlements Guide, Living Independently Guide and Lancashire's Care Leaver Strategy. We also have two Lancashire care leaver representatives for the Young People's Benchmarking Forum, this is a national organisation and partners the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum.-see below for more details on the NLCBF and its aim.
  4. **Prepare and plan for improvement based on understanding of local needs gained from the three previous steps** -Throughout the New Belongings process and the improvement plan it was obvious that Lancashire due to its size has different challenges and different resources from one district to another. Therefore the improvement plan had to set a series of

pilots in localities which still continue within Lancashire's care leaver plan, examples of this are:

- Lancaster/Morecambe -Partnership work with the local council run leisure services, care leavers have free access to the leisure centre, thus improving on physical and mental health, this work is now continuing county wide.
  - Preston, Wyre and Fylde - Care leaver Mentoring Scheme, LCC staff and UCLAN students will mentor a care leaver, improving support networks, this will continue county wide over the next 12 months if successful.
5. **Obtain the support of senior leadership** - Care leavers is a priority for the Cabinet, the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) and Local Authority Senior Management Team. Care leavers also attend the CPB and express their views and challenge practice. Children's Social care Senior managers have and continue to attend the care leaver forum so lines of communication are open and views listened to which enable us to see 'how we're doing'.

From March 2017 a further survey will be completed with care leavers to get their views on how they feel the new PPA service is going, it is envisaged that we will use the New Belongings survey again as we will get a good measure of any areas that still require improvement as well as what's going well. In the meantime care leavers have access to the care leaver forum, also care leavers at 21 complete an exit evaluation and are able to express their views on that.

**National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum (NLCBF)** - Lancashire are now members of NLCBF, it is a network promoting the development of quality leaving care services in member local authorities and partner organisations through a process of benchmarking and shared learning, with an ultimate aim of achieving the best outcomes for care leavers. The Young People's Benchmarking forum sits alongside NLCBF, Lancashire have two care leaver representatives that attend meetings with other professionals and care leavers from other local authorities across the country, the main aim is to share ideas and good practise so this can influence change in their local authorities. In December our two representatives attended an event in London and discussed ongoing projects and work in Lancashire with 32 local authorities.

**Education, Employment and Training (EET)**

In addition to the above Lancashire County Council has made a commitment to offer all care leavers not in education employment or training (NEET) the opportunity of a work placement or apprenticeship. The latest November report for year 12 children looked after (Care Leavers 2016) from the Virtual Scholl Headteacher shows the following performance:

**November Data: total 146 young people**

College/ FE	School/6 <sup>th</sup> form	Apprent iceship	Training Provider	Employ ment- no training	Work Placement	NEET	Not availabl e for EET
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<b>97</b> <b>(66.5%)</b>	<b>16</b> <b>(10.9%)</b>	<b>5</b> <b>(3.45%)</b>	<b>5</b> <b>(3.45%)</b>	<b>2</b> <b>(1.38%)</b>	<b>2</b> <b>(1.38%)</b>	<b>16</b> <b>(10.9%)</b>	<b>3</b> <b>(2.04%)</b>
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**NEET:**

2 actively working with Employment Support Team

2 referred to Employment Support team

12 working with WPEH case workers to identify options- encourage to consider working with EST when appropriate.

**Not Available for EET: 3**

Safeguarding placement

Custodial

Specialist Therapeutic Setting

**Ongoing tracking and support:**

**Teams involved: WPEH. CSC/Care Leavers- especially Personal Advisor/Virtual School/Employment Support Team**

- Regular reports run to identify NEET and sent to the named WPEH Case Worker, Social Worker, PPA and Virtual School to be followed up.
- Termly PEP reviews (16-18).
- Attendance at the PA locality meetings of WPEH/Virtual School team member, to inform of the offer, discuss individual cases and build effective cross service working.
- Next Tracking report: January 2017.

**Update on Employment Support Team support to CLA/Care Leavers.**

Employment and Support Team have currently 124 active Children Looked After/Leaving care young people being supported. 42 of these are currently 'on hold' but this is due to a number of issues such as housing, illness, pregnancy, police involvement and contact is maintained to enable more active support and actions to be delivered when the young person is ready and able to progress.

For some of our young people with significant issues it can take 6- 12 months of support to enable them to access a programme successfully and move forwards on their employment journey.

**Post 16 Young people who have started a placement between 1/4/16 – 3/11/16**

32 in total

16 – WorkStart (18-24 year olds)

16 – Future Horizons (16-18 year olds)

NB – young people may have had more than one placement opportunity however we only record one placement for general statistical purposes currently.

**Young people who have progressed on to paid employment following a placement between 1/4/16 – 3/11/16**

14 in total

3 – employed (private sector)

7 – apprenticeships (private sector)

3 – employed (public sector)

1 – apprenticeship (schools workforce)

### **Year 11 pupils :**

- All year 11 pupils informed of CEIAG/EST offer by letter.
- Jointly the Employment and Support Team and WPEHS have established and hosting of 3 x Year 11 events which are being delivered across the County, during November,
- 20 Year 11 pupils have already expressed interest in support from the Employment and Support Team and 7 have begun programmes.

We also provide a wider range of performance information to the Improvement Board in relation to whole cohort of care leavers. Below outlines the improvement in three key areas: keeping in touch, EET and Suitable accommodation:

	2015/15			
	Stat Neighbours	Lancashire	North West	England
In Touch		67.52%		85.62%
EET	49.90%	36.49%	46.97%	47.89%
Suitable Accom	83.90%	67.13%	82.42%	80.74%

	2015/16			
	Stat Neighbours	Lancashire	North West	England
In Touch	89.00%	86.75%	90.64%	87.32%
EET	49.80%	40.96%	47.95%	49.28%
Suitable Accom	85.90%	77.11%	85.55%	82.53%

	December 2016			
	Stat Neighbours	Lancashire	North West	England
In Touch		94.00%		
EET		50.70%		
Suitable Accom		89.20%		

In respect to corporate parenting the Government published its strategy to support care leavers – Keep on Caring – Supporting Young People from Care to Independence in July 2016 (Appendix 1). This outlines a range of initiative, including clear expectations for local authorities and wider government departments.

In response to this Lancashire has reviewed its Staying Put allowance and increased this to £222 which is higher than most local authorities in the region. It is hoped that this will encourage more young people to remain living with their foster carer rather than leave home at 18 which is an objective within the Government strategy.

Lancashire has also signed up to the Children's Society care leaver pledge <http://bit.ly/24VuOWt> and the CPB has been influential in championing the support for care leavers and in seeking support from District Councils to exempt care leavers

from Council Tax payments until they are 25. In line with this the CPB has challenged District Councils to look at its housing policies and to give prioritisation to care leavers and their needs. The local authority also has a Supported Accommodation and Learning Offer (SALO) Board which is again working with housing providers to look at more suitable accommodation for young people who are homeless and care leavers.

We have a robust action plan to address all the above areas which is continually monitored by Senior Managers. In addition the Improvement Board and Ofsted via their inspection monitoring visits will monitor the progress being made and the improved outcomes for care leavers.

### **Consultations**

N/A

### **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

If we do not

### **Risk management**

The risk of not improving services to care leavers is that Ofsted will continue to judge our services as inadequate and the DfE will consider what further action is necessary to make the changes required to improve the services. More importantly care leavers will not be receiving the support they require and will therefore be left vulnerable and at risk and will not make the progress and outcomes they are entitled to.

### **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate





HM Government

# Keep On Caring

Supporting Young People from Care to  
Independence

July 2016

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## Ministerial Foreword

A good corporate parent should have the same aspirations for a child in care or care leaver as a good parent would have for their own child. It means providing them with the stability and support they need to make progress; and helping them to access new opportunities and experiences that inspire them to set ambitious goals for themselves. It means celebrating their successes, but also recognising that they will sometimes make mistakes and need help to get back on track. It also means supporting them to gain the skills and confidence to live independent lives, while letting them know that they have someone to call on for help if the going gets tough.

Earlier this week, the Secretary of State and I published our strategy for supporting all of our most vulnerable children and young people – *‘Putting Children First’*. This strategy sets out specifically and in more depth what it means to put care leavers first.

I know, from my own family, that care leavers will have faced many challenges in their lives and are likely to need much more support than other young people as they make the transition to adulthood. Yet, in most cases, care leavers are not only making that transition at a much younger age than their peers, but they also typically get far less support from their corporate parent than other young people get from their birth parents. That is why I am determined to ensure that the state and wider society play a much stronger and more active role in improving care leavers’ life chances. For me, it’s the hallmark of a compassionate society, something our country has in bucket-loads.

This strategy calls for a revolution in the way that we think about supporting young people coming out of care. It asks local and central government to up their game as corporate parents, using the level of support that we expect a reasonable parent to provide for their child as the benchmark for how they should approach their role. And it provides a call to arms for wider society to better support care leavers, through engagement with the ‘care leaver covenant’ that we plan to launch later this year.

It identifies three key ways in which we will drive improvements in leaving care services:

Firstly, it sets out how we will use the Innovation Programme to rethink how services are delivered and what support is provided, with a strong focus on finding new and better ways of helping care leavers develop the social networks that will sustain them not just in the years immediately after leaving care, but throughout their lives. We will also support new ways of delivering services, for example through Trusts, which have a clear and specific focus on improving care leavers’ life chances.

Secondly, it sets out how we will strengthen the culture of corporate parenting, both locally – through our planned legislative measures – and through changes to central government policies, so that they better respond to care leavers’ unique status and circumstances.

And finally, it sets out how we will support and challenge local areas, so that all deliver to the standards of the best.

By delivering the commitments outlined in this document, and applying the same reform principles and methods to care leavers that we are for the rest of children's social care, we can begin to drive the necessary improvements to the quality of support received by young people leaving care. But this does not mark the end of our ambition. We will continue to work across government during the remainder of this Parliament to make the life chances of care leavers something to celebrate, not denounce. If we keep on caring we can, together, give them the optimism and the future they deserve.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Edward Timpson', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

**Edward Timpson**  
**Minister of State for Children & Families**

## SUMMARY

The government is passionate about improving the lives and life chances of care leavers. Young people leaving care constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in our society, and both government and wider society have a moral obligation to give them the support they need as they make the transition to adulthood and independent living.

There has been much good work done over the past few years to improve that support, including the actions set out in the first cross-government care leaver strategy published in 2013<sup>1</sup>, and the introduction of the Staying Put duty in 2014, which is already helping many care leavers to continue living with their former foster carers beyond age 18.

However, outcomes for care leavers remain much worse than for their counterparts in the general population and the quality of leaving care services provided by local authorities remains variable. The care leaver cohort is also changing, as more children enter care at age 16 and over, and with more unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) entering the care system. These changes present new challenges for service providers.

This document sets out a vision for the further reform of support for care leavers based on innovation, system reform, and the embedding of corporate parenting responsibility across society.

The strategy makes a commitment that the government will use the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme to rethink transitions to adulthood for young people in the children's social care system, with a focus on developing new ways to provide care leavers with the personal support networks they need to thrive; piloting 'Staying Close' – a variant of Staying Put for those leaving residential care; and testing out alternative models of delivery for leaving care services through the use of Trusts, Mutuels and other arrangements. It gives a clear commitment to test payment-by-results approaches, and commits the government to create the first care leaver-specific Social Impact Bond. And it also provides a commitment to support and test approaches that empower care leavers to have a greater say in the design and delivery of services.

The document goes on to identify and describe how the State, as corporate parents, will support care leavers to achieve 5 key outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> [Care Leaver Strategy. A cross-departmental strategy for children leaving care](#), 2013

The first of these is that all young people leaving care should be better prepared and supported to live independently. The actions that we will undertake in order to achieve this include:

- setting out in law for the first time what it means for a local authority to be a good corporate parent;
- creating a new care leaver covenant;
- introducing a new legal duty on local authorities to consult on, and publish information about, services for care leavers; and
- extending existing entitlements so that all care leavers will be able to access support from a local authority Personal Adviser to age 25.

The second key outcome is improved access to education, employment and training. In order to achieve this the government will:

- promote the take up of supported internships, including through the provision of targeted information to Personal Advisers;
- meet the training costs for care leavers undertaking apprenticeships up to age 25;
- support care leavers' access to, and achievement in, further and higher education, employment and apprenticeships;
- guarantee a place on the National Citizen Service to every child in care or care leaver aged 16 or 17; and
- consider how best to improve access for care leavers to employment opportunities in government departments and their agencies.

The third key outcome is that care leavers should experience stability in their lives, and feel safe and secure. We will help to achieve this by:

- committing to introduce 'Staying Close' provision for young people leaving residential care;
- continuing to fund local authorities to support Staying Put arrangements;
- providing support for the implementation of the Supported Accommodation Framework;
- raising awareness of care leavers' unique status and their entitlements among prison and probation staff through the provision of additional training; and
- increasing the funding local authorities will receive for supporting former unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

The fourth key outcome is improved access to health support. In order to achieve this we will:

- through a new Expert Group, produce care pathways, quality standards and models of care for looked after children and care leavers with mental health problems;
- use the new Mental Health Services Data Set to inform the future delivery of services to care leavers; and
- improve accountability regarding the local provision of health services, for example through Care Quality Commission and Joint Targeted Area inspections.

The fifth and final key outcome that we wish to promote through this strategy is that care leavers should achieve financial stability. We will help them to do this by:

- exempting care leavers from changes to eligibility for housing support for 18-21 year-olds in Universal Credit;
- reviewing the case to extend the exemption to the Shared Accommodation Rate of housing support within Universal Credit, for care leavers to age 25; and
- ensuring, through our review of the Personal Adviser role, that care leavers are able to access advice and support to help them manage their money.

In addition to identifying and implementing specific measures to improve outcomes for care leavers, this strategy makes it clear that the government has a significant role to play in driving reform and improvement. Partly, this will involve promoting and sharing best practice, through the creation of the new Children's Social Care What Works Centre, and our work with the 'Partners in Practice' group of local authorities. We will also continue to support and challenge local authorities and, where failure is found and services are found to be inadequate, we will intervene.

Finally, it is important that we should have effective means of measuring the impact of actions that we will be undertaking through this strategy. The Department for Education (DfE) will continue to publish care leaver outcome data annually and, for the year ending March 2016, will also publish data for 17 and 18 year-old care leavers for the first time. Work will also be undertaken to explore how data can be shared more effectively between relevant government departments. To ensure that care leavers' voices are heard more powerfully in the formulation of government policy, a new national care leaver advisory group will be created and facilitated by the DfE. And to ensure that the implementation of this strategy is managed effectively, a senior group of Whitehall officials will meet twice yearly to review progress and goals.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## A Brief History of Leaving Care Support

- 1.1 Before the Leaving Care Act (2000)<sup>2</sup>, there was no statutory framework in place for care leavers, with each local authority determining what level of support it provided. With no nationally-set expectation about what was an adequate level of support, many care leavers received only minimal assistance. The 2000 Act introduced, for the first time, requirements on local authorities to: assess the needs of the young person once they left care; appoint a Personal Adviser for them; and develop a pathway plan. This support was available to care leavers up to age 18, or to age 21 if the young person was in education.
- 1.2 In 2008, the Children and Young Persons Act<sup>3</sup> introduced provisions that required local authorities to provide assistance to care leavers in education (including a £2,000 bursary for those in higher education); and extended support from a Personal Adviser to age 21 for all care leavers; and to 25 if they remained in education.
- 1.3. During the last Parliament, there were three further key developments to improve the quality of support that care leavers receive:
  - The first cross-government care leaver strategy was published in 2013<sup>4</sup>. It recognised the need to work coherently across government to address care leavers' needs in the round; and introduced a number of changes to policies and practices so that care leavers were better supported. These included measures to better identify care leavers so that they could receive tailored support. For example, Jobcentre Plus introduced a 'marker' so that care leavers could be identified and offered additional help, such as access to the Work Programme from day one of unemployment;
  - The 2014 Children & Families Act<sup>5</sup> introduced the 'Staying Put' duty. This requires local authorities to support young people to remain with their former foster carers to age 21 where both the young person and carer want the arrangement to continue – allowing those young people to enjoy continuity in their care arrangements and a more gradual transition to adulthood; and

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<sup>2</sup> [Children \(Leaving Care\) Act, 2000](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Children and Young Persons Act, 2008](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Care Leaver Strategy – A cross-departmental strategy for children leaving care, 2013](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Children and Families Act, 2014](#)

- The introduction of a new inspection framework for children’s social care in 2014<sup>6</sup>, which for the first time had a specific judgement on the quality of leaving care support.

## Our Vision

- 1.4 We are determined to bring about the widest reaching reforms to children’s social care in a generation. We want a system staffed and led by the best trained professionals; dynamic and free to innovate in the interests of children; with less bureaucracy; new checks and balances designed to hold the system to account in the right ways; and new ways to intervene where services consistently fail some of the most vulnerable in our society. Our strategy – *Putting Children First* – published on 4 July 2016, sets out how we will achieve this.
- 1.5 The best children’s social care services in England deliver truly excellent help and support to children and young people. These services do not just improve their circumstances; they transform them completely. But whilst there is much excellent practice out there, evidence from Ofsted inspections points to continued variability in the quality of work with children and young people.
- 1.6 We do not underestimate the pressures that children’s social care faces: increased fiscal constraint; higher demand for services; and new threats to our children and young people as they become targets for radicalisation, child sexual exploitation or gang culture. But we know that these challenges are far from insurmountable. Ofsted’s analysis shows that the pattern of inspection outcomes is not about how deprived an area is, or even the amount of money being spent on children’s social care – some of the lowest performers are in fact the highest spenders. Ofsted’s inspections this year show that, regardless of context, providing outstanding services *is* possible, and ‘good’ is a standard that any local authority can achieve and maintain<sup>7</sup>.
- 1.7 To support this innovation and drive for excellence, by 2020 we want to see a more diverse range of children’s social care organisations, operating over new geographical areas, supported by meaningful data and an inspection regime that supports high-quality evidence-based front line practice. And crucially, the performance of these new organisations must be driven by challenging, sharp and practice-focused accountability. Our most vulnerable children and young people deserve nothing less.

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<sup>6</sup> [Inspecting local authority children’s services: framework](#), 2014, Ofsted

<sup>7</sup> [Ofsted Social Care Annual Report](#), 2016, Ofsted

1.8 This vision applies just as much to the services and support that we provide to young people leaving care as it does to other parts of the social care system. The measures we introduced during the last Parliament have been important in driving up the quality of support that care leavers receive, but they have not resulted in the fundamental shift in care leavers' life chances that we want to see. To achieve that change, we believe that we need to focus on three key areas:

- Developing new ways of supporting care leavers;
- Making corporate parenting everyone's responsibility; and
- Driving system improvement.

### **Developing new ways of supporting care leavers**

1.9 We do not believe that we can achieve the 'step-change' that is needed simply by providing more of the same. That is why we want to stimulate new thinking about how we help care leavers to make successful transitions to adulthood – both in terms of how services are delivered, and what support is provided.

1.10 We want to explore whether there are different models of delivery that can achieve better outcomes for care leavers. We can see the potential benefits of, for example, local services for care leavers being delivered via a Care Leaver Trust – a new organisation with a culture and objectives entirely focused on care leavers. A Trust model could provide an environment where there is greater scope to innovate; and greater flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of their care leaver cohort. Trusts could also operate across a bigger geographical area, providing a more consistent offer across neighbouring local authorities and result in more effective commissioning of services.

1.11 We also want to explore different ways of helping care leavers to develop the social networks that will sustain them during their transition to adulthood and beyond. Personal Advisers play an important role in helping care leavers to achieve their goals, but cannot always provide all the support that care leavers need. In the next section of this document we set out a range of alternative models that provide new ways of meeting the practical and emotional needs of care leavers that we believe will provide greater continuity of support.

### **Making corporate parenting everyone's responsibility**

1.12 We know that there are many individuals and teams working in local authority leaving care services that are committed to supporting children in care and care leavers in a way that any other parent would. In some local authorities, like Trafford, that commitment starts at the top of the organisation and permeates through all of its services. But, in many other areas, there are examples of one

part of the council helping care leavers while another part of the organisation is acting in a way that undermines that work. We will **introduce a set of corporate parenting principles** that will require all departments within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, encouraging them to look at the services and support that they provide through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do to support their own children.

- 1.13 We also want that corporate parenting responsibility to extend beyond what is provided by local authorities, so that government departments and their agencies, charities and private sector organisations play their part. Later sections of this document set out examples of how policies of individual government departments have been adapted to recognise the challenges faced by care leavers. And **we will introduce a ‘care leaver covenant’** that will enable organisations to make commitments to care leavers in a way that is most appropriate for them.

## Driving system improvement

- 1.14 As the spread of Ofsted judgements about leaving care services illustrates, there is significant variation in the quality of support that care leavers receive. It is important that government takes an active role in highlighting best practice and sharing what works, as well as providing strong challenge where services are not good enough. The final section of this document sets out how we will do this.

## What are we trying to achieve?

- 1.15 To achieve our ambitions for care leavers, we need to use the three drivers of improvement listed above to make progress against five key issues that care leavers raised during our consultation events:
- Not being adequately prepared or supported to deal with the challenges of living independently;
  - Barriers accessing education, employment and training;
  - Lack of stability, safety and security;
  - Difficulties in accessing the health support they need, in particular help to maintain their emotional health and well-being; and
  - Problems achieving financial stability<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Source: Between January and March 2016 DfE officials led a series of consultation events with care leavers. See also page 17.

- 1.16 Many of these issues are inter-related. Problems with money are often exacerbated by the fact that many care leavers are not in education, employment or training (NEET). And the lack of a stable, safe place to live can impact negatively on a young person's emotional health and put them at greater danger of a number of safeguarding risks, such as sexual exploitation or involvement with gangs. This reinforces the need for a cross-government approach. The measures that local authorities and government departments have agreed to take forward are set out below under the five key outcomes that we are seeking to achieve.
- 1.17 As the following paragraphs illustrate, achieving those outcomes depends not just on what happens when young people leave care. The quality of care they receive earlier in their lives is also crucial. That is why, alongside this care leaver strategy, DfE has also published recently a wider children's social care policy paper, setting out what we will do to transform the children's social care sector<sup>9</sup>; as well as the report of Sir Martin Narey's review of residential care<sup>10</sup>.

## How well is the system working at present?

- 1.18 Making an overall assessment of the quality of support that care leavers receive is not straightforward. In particular, it is challenging because of the significant variation in the quality of support provided at a local level – which is reflected in both the outcomes that care leavers achieve and in the spread of Ofsted judgements about leaving care services.
- 1.19 Our consultations with care leavers also illustrated a wide range of personal experiences. For example, some care leavers reported that their Personal Adviser had been the key person who had helped them to successfully navigate the challenges of living independently, while for others, support from their Personal Adviser had been limited and ineffective<sup>11</sup>. It is also challenging because the nature of the cohort is constantly changing, making the drawing of comparisons with care leavers' outcomes in previous years less reliable.
- 1.20 This next section provides an overview of the current position, drawing on: the information we have on the cohort (and how it is changing); the national outcome data that DfE publishes annually; Ofsted reports and judgements about the quality

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<sup>9</sup> [Putting children first – Delivering our vision for excellent children's social care](#), Department for Education, 2016

<sup>10</sup> [Residential care in England, Report of Sir Martin Narey's independent review of children's residential care](#), Sir Martin Narey, 2016

<sup>11</sup> Source: Between January and March 2016 DfE officials led a series of consultation events with care leavers. See also page 17.

of local delivery; and feedback from the care leavers we consulted on the strategy while it was being developed.

## A changing cohort

1.21 Around 10,800 young people left care aged 16 or over in the year ending March 2015, an increase of over 40% in the last decade. There are an increasing number of young people who enter care aged 16 or over, accounting for 16% of all those who entered care in the year ending March 2015, compared to 12% in the year ending March 2011. Changes to the law which require young people on remand to become looked after, along with the impact of the Southwark Judgement – which means that 16 and 17 year-olds who present as homeless also become looked after children – have both changed the nature of the cohort of care leavers that local authorities must support. And local authorities are looking after increasing numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and supporting more care leavers who are former UASC<sup>12</sup>.

## Care leavers' outcomes

1.22 Care leavers' outcomes are not determined solely by the quality of leaving care support that they receive – although this is clearly an important factor. But Care leavers' experiences before and during care are also important determinants of their outcomes, which means that comparisons between the outcomes of care leavers and other young people in the general population are of only limited value when making judgements about the quality and impact of the support that is provided when young people leave care.

1.23 The lasting impact of the events and circumstances that led to a child being taken into care; the high incidence of Special Educational Needs (SEN) among care leavers (around 60% of children in care for 12 months have SEN, compared to 15% of children in the general population)<sup>13</sup> and emotional health problems (around half of children in care have a Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) score that is borderline or cause for concern)<sup>14</sup>; the impact of placement moves while in care (including the resultant change in school that often occurs) – all contribute to low attainment, with only 14% of children in care achieving 5 good

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<sup>12</sup> Statistics about the care leaver cohort taken from the Department for Education's [Statistical First Release for children looked-after in England \(including adoption\) 2014-15](#)

<sup>13</sup> Statistics about care leaver cohort taken from the Department of Education's [Statistical First Release Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 31 March 2015](#)

<sup>14</sup> Statistics about care leaver cohort taken from the Department of Education's [Statistical First Release Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England](#), 31 March 2014

GCSEs in 2015, compared to 53% of non-looked after children<sup>15</sup>. Leaving school with few qualifications adversely affects care leavers' progress into further or higher education, apprenticeships or skilled jobs.

- 1.24 As well as these historical factors, care leavers also face the added challenge of having to cope with the demands of living on their own at a young age: having to manage finances, maintain a home and manage their lives independently, often without the support from families that most of us take for granted. That is why it is incumbent on the state as the corporate parent to do as much as it can to give care leavers the support and opportunities they need to succeed. While we cannot mitigate the impact of all of the disadvantages that care leavers have experienced, we can ensure that as a society we do as much as we can to help care leavers overcome them.
- 1.25 Notwithstanding these points, the fact remains that the data on care leavers' outcomes is stark and there has been limited improvement over time. In the year ending March 2015, local authorities were 'in touch' with, and provided data to DfE on, 88% of care leavers. This is an increase from 84% in the year ending March 2014<sup>16</sup>. In many of the cases where no information was provided, this was because the care leaver had either refused contact, or had told the local authority that they no longer required support. Nevertheless, the wide variation in local authority performance on keeping in touch indicates that more needs to be done to maintain contact with care leavers in some areas.
- 1.26 In the year ending March 2015, 39% of 19-21 year-old care leavers were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) – an increase of 1 percentage point compared to the previous year. Of these, over a third were NEET due to either a disability, or because they were a young parent. Six percent of 19-21 year-old care leavers were in Higher Education; and a further 18% were in other types of education. Twenty-three per cent were in employment or training, an increase of 3 percentage points on the previous year<sup>17</sup>.
- 1.27 There is no national data that reports on care leavers' longer term outcomes, but research consistently shows that care leavers are over-represented in studies on people in custody, homelessness and other negative outcomes<sup>18</sup>, although those

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<sup>15</sup> Statistics about care leaver cohort taken from the Department of Education's [Statistical First Release Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 31 March 2015](#)

<sup>16</sup> Statistics about the care leaver cohort taken from the Department for Education's [Statistical First Release for children looked-after in England \(including adoption\) 2014-15](#)

<sup>17</sup> Statistics about the care leaver cohort taken from the Department for Education's [Statistical First Release for children looked-after in England \(including adoption\) 2014-15](#)

<sup>18</sup> Department of Education, National Audit Office *Care leavers' transition to adulthood*, July 2015

studies normally include people of all ages and so are not focused on the current cohort of care leavers.

## Ofsted judgements on the quality of leaving care services



1.28 The two tables above<sup>19</sup> show the spread of Ofsted judgements for both the 'care leaver sub-judgement' and 'overall effectiveness' judgement from inspections Ofsted has conducted under its Single Inspection Framework. They show that two-thirds of leaving care services, and three-quarters of overall effectiveness judgements were judged to either 'require improvement' or to be 'inadequate'. Although more care leaving services (36%) were judged 'good' or 'outstanding' than social care services overall (25%), the picture as a whole shows that the quality of care leaving support that local authorities provide needs to improve significantly.

1.29 The key messages from Ofsted inspection reports are that:

- The quality of pathway planning for care leavers is not good enough in around two-thirds of local authorities inspected, with a lack of clear, specific actions to drive care leavers' progress;
- Not enough is done to raise awareness among care leavers of their entitlements;
- In around half of local authorities inspected, not enough support was being provided to help care leavers to find and sustain education, training or employment;

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<sup>19</sup> Data provided by Ofsted



- In around a third of local authorities, care leavers did not have access to a suitable range of accommodation options; and
  - In too many local authorities, senior corporate parents did not consistently prioritise the needs of care leavers or have sufficiently high aspirations for them.
- 1.30 There were also a number of positive themes reported by Ofsted and many cases of good practice in individual authorities, or on particular aspects of leaving care support. In most local authorities care leavers themselves spoke positively about the support provided by Personal Advisers. In the best performing authorities, effective partnerships with Housing Services were providing care leavers with a range of independent and semi-independent accommodation options to reflect their different levels of readiness for independent living. And in the majority of recent inspections, Ofsted was identifying effective work being undertaken to improve local authorities' performance on keeping in touch with their care leavers.
- 1.31 Trafford and Kensington and Chelsea have shown that it is possible to provide outstanding support to care leavers. Their work is characterised by tenacious planning for young people's futures at all levels and across all key agencies. Young people particularly valued the caring and enduring relationships with Personal Advisers and from others that were responsible for their care and support. Significantly, in these local authorities, there is a strong track record of effective and ambitious corporate parenting of looked after children and care leavers.

## **Feedback from care leavers**

- 1.32 During our many conversations with care leavers, a number of consistent themes emerged:
- Where they had developed a good relationship with an adult – a former foster carer, a member of staff at a residential home, an independent visitor or social worker – they wanted support to maintain those relationships once they left care, on an informal basis;
  - They wanted the professionals who support them to have high aspirations for them; and to encourage and support them to achieve their goals;
  - They reported that leaving care still felt like a 'cliff-edge', where they were suddenly responsible for managing budgets, running a home; and maintaining their participation in education or work on their own – with insufficient preparation for these challenges. The introduction of Staying Put was seen by care leavers as a positive way of smoothing out the process of transition to adulthood and provided for continuity of relationships and care arrangements;

- As well as not having been given the necessary life skills before leaving care, they also felt that the process of leaving care itself was often rushed and that planning for leaving care should start earlier. A number of care leavers wanted greater flexibility around the age of leaving care, to avoid their 18th birthday feeling like a 'point of no return';
- Care leavers said that they wanted more choice about where they lived and who supported them; and more information about the support that was available to them locally; and what they were entitled to from universal services such as Jobcentre Plus;
- They said that there were times when their emotional health and well-being was not positive, but when that was the case they found it difficult to access the support they needed. In particular, they found it difficult to access adult mental health services once they turned 18;
- A minority of care leavers reported that they felt scared – in particular when they did not feel that the place they were accommodated in was safe, either because of its location or because of the other people who lived there – or that they were vulnerable to a range of safeguarding risks, such as involvement in gangs, crime, or sexual exploitation;
- They said that they wanted to be empowered to do things for themselves and have opportunities to get on in life – but that there needed to be greater understanding among service providers about the different challenges they faced compared to young people their age in the general population – in particular that they often did not have the safety-net of a supportive family network;
- But overwhelmingly, the biggest issue raised by care leavers was one of isolation and loneliness; and the difficulty of navigating their way through their late teens and early twenties without a strong and stable social network to support them.

## Developing the Strategy

1.33 In developing this strategy, we have taken account of the views of a broad range of individuals and organisations. Firstly, we have listened to what care leavers have told us. At eight separate consultation events we asked care leavers to think about their experience of leaving care and tell us:

- What were the most difficult challenges they had faced;
- In which areas they would have welcomed additional support; and
- In which areas did they felt well-supported and how this helped their transition to adulthood.

1.34 A summary of the key points that emerged from those discussions with care leavers is set out above. We also held discussions with the organisations that support care leavers, both individually and in a roundtable event that brought together all of the key voluntary sector bodies that work with these young people.

1.35 We were also keen to ensure that we properly understood the delivery challenges involved in providing services to care leavers and so have held detailed discussions with Ofsted (a summary of Ofsted's key findings in relation to leaving care support are set out above), as well as engaging with local authority colleagues who deliver leaving care services – through consultation with members of the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum (an association with members from over 80 local authority leaving care teams) and through working with Mark Riddell (Manager of the outstanding Children in Care and Leaving Care team in Trafford) who has worked with DfE as a 'critical friend', throughout the development of the strategy.

## 2. INNOVATION AND SYSTEM REFORM

2.1 Care leavers have told us that we need a system that puts the development of meaningful, long-term relationships and social networks at its heart. The Children's Social Care Innovation Programme is central to achieving this. The programme is already supporting local authorities and other organisations to develop new approaches to children's social care, through an investment of over £100 million, encompassing 53 projects. So far the Innovation Programme has focused on three areas:

- Rethinking children's social work: These projects have started to show evidence that giving social workers and other frontline workers freedom and support to design services that they know children and families need can have a dramatic impact;
- Rethinking support for adolescents in or on the edge of care: providing integrated models of support; and
- Other innovative solutions outside these two priority areas: – providing the opportunity for the sector to drive reform where it is most needed or come to us with innovative ideas falling outside of the two priority areas.

2.2 In April this year, we announced a further £200 million investment to extend the programme<sup>20</sup>. We will use the next phase of the Innovation Programme to make progress on two fronts:

- Deepening our understanding of the conditions needed for excellent practice and supporting more local authorities to rethink their whole practice system around them; and
- Building our evidence base and understanding of how we can best support young people making the transition to adulthood.

2.3 This focus on transition to adulthood in the second round of the programme provides us with the opportunity to work with local authorities and charities to find new ways to deliver services and support to care leavers that result in them achieving better outcomes. There are a number of areas where we are keen to test new approaches.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/200-million-to-transform-life-chances-of-vulnerable-young-people>

## Providing More Practical and Emotional Support

- 2.4 While we want all care leavers to benefit from high quality Personal Adviser support to age 25, we recognise that the support that care leavers currently receive is patchy; and even where it is good, Personal Advisers cannot always provide care leavers with as much practical and emotional support as they need. Just as social workers need to be supported to develop excellent practice skills, and given the freedom to work in innovative ways, so too do Personal Advisers.
- 2.5 **We are carrying out a review of the Personal Adviser role** to better understand how they spend their time and identify models of delivery that maximise contact time between them and the young people they are supporting, so that they can develop the trusting relationships that care leavers value so much. A second stage of the review will consider wider questions about the role, including: what skills, knowledge and qualifications are needed to perform the role effectively; how we can raise the status of the role; whether the name ‘Personal Adviser’ best describes what this important role encompasses; what are the routes into Personal Adviser work (including for care leavers); and whether there are enough opportunities for development training for those currently carrying out the role. Given how important it is that care leavers are able to manage their money effectively the review will also consider how Personal Advisers can best support them in this regard.
- 2.6 **We will also encourage employers to come forward to create a Personal Adviser Apprenticeship**, which would prepare people for the demands of this challenging role; and also open a route for care-experienced individuals to join the workforce and play a bigger part in the delivery of services to care leavers. We have had positive discussions with the employer that is leading the development of new children’s social care apprenticeships as part of the Trailblazer apprenticeship programme, and will announce further details in due course. We anticipate that the apprenticeship would be set at Level 3 (equivalent to A level) and would take between 12 and 18 months to complete.
- 2.7 **But we are keen to test out approaches that look beyond the Personal Adviser model**, drawing on other sources of support so that care leavers have a wider network around them.

*“If it wasn’t for my independent visitor, I would not be where I am today – she raised my ambition and she has helped me by showing my opportunities, helping with applications. Most importantly she has stuck by me; even though the service ran out and still is here to this day!” Care Leaver.*

## 2.8 Examples of the sort of approaches we want to invest in include:

- Supporting continuing relationships with former carers and professionals: during our consultations with care leavers, a number of participants spoke passionately about a key individual who had helped them in their childhood. For some it was a former foster carer, for others it was a member of staff at their former residential home; and for others still it was a social worker, or independent visitor. Staying Put allows for a continuing relationship with a former foster carer. But where Staying Put isn't the right answer, foster carers may still be able to provide ongoing emotional and practical support even if the young person does not still live with them – in the same way as parents do when their children leave home. And there is also the opportunity for continuing relationships between care leavers and other professionals they know and trust. We are keen to see projects that harness this potential support by helping those relationships to continue once the young person leaves care;
- Mentoring: Many local authorities will already have appointed mentors for care leavers, including adults with personal experience of the care system who have a unique understanding of the challenges that care leavers face in moving from care to independence. But we don't know enough about the successful features of the best mentoring programmes, which is why we are interested in identifying and scaling-up those interventions that have the most robust evidence of success.
- Family-Finding Approaches: Based on an approach first used in the United States, family-finding uses family group conferences to identify a range of adults, including family members and professionals who have known the young person during their childhood, who are prepared to make a life-long commitment to the young person. Each individual's contribution will differ, but in sum represents a robust package of support that the young person can draw on.
- Local Area Co-ordinators: We are keen to test an approach that has been used successfully in adult social care which involves area co-ordinators working with vulnerable adults to help them access community resources and support which, over time, reduces their reliance on statutory services and helps them to develop a supportive, community-based network of activities and personal contacts. This could be particularly beneficial to care leavers with a disability, who may need ongoing adult social care support to help them achieve positive outcomes.

## Delivering Services Differently

2.9 **We also want to free-up local authorities to deliver services in new ways and in partnership with the voluntary sector.** New models can:

- refresh leadership and attract strong and ambitious people to organisations where new ways of doing things are needed;
- provide a sharper focus on children’s social care as a whole or on aspects of the system;
- enable existing strong organisations to innovate more easily and to create a distinctive culture of excellence; and
- bring together different areas and organisations in robust structures which go beyond collaboration and into integration.

2.10 **City Deals** in particular provide an opportunity to test out new approaches and we are working closely with Greater Manchester to explore the possibility of delivering a single care leaving service across the 10 Greater Manchester authorities, using Trafford’s leading-edge service to drive an improved offer to all care leavers. This sort of innovation opens up new opportunities to commission services in a way that: provides greater value for money; creates greater flexibility in placing young people in accommodation in neighbouring boroughs; and has the potential to create a more consistent offer that reflects best practice across all participating authorities.

2.11 **Care Leaver Trusts, which give those working closer to the frontline the freedoms and flexibilities to operate more innovatively and creatively, represent an approach that we are keen to support through the Innovation Programme.** Trusts could provide the opportunity for new bodies focussed entirely on improving care leavers’ life chances, harnessing the power of the voluntary sector to provide the networks and relationships that we know are key to a successful transition.

2.12 We are also keen that local authorities, and the staff that work in them, should consider what scope there is to establish **public service mutuals** to deliver services to care leavers differently. One example of a mutual model which is already transforming the delivery of children’s services is Achieving for Children – a social enterprise working across the London Boroughs of Kingston and Richmond.

2.13 **Social impact bonds** (SIBs) are designed to help reform public service delivery by allowing social sector organisations to participate in ‘payment by results’ contracts. SIBs improve the social outcomes of publicly-funded services by making

funding conditional on achieving results. Investors pay for the project at the start, and then receive payments based on the results achieved by the project. Rather than focusing on inputs or outputs, SIBs are based on achieving social ‘outcomes’. The outcomes are predefined and measurable.

- 2.14 Working with local commissioners, voluntary and community sector organisations and social investors, we believe that there is significant potential for SIBs to improve the way that care leavers are supported as they make a transition to independent living, and particularly to support their sustained participation in employment and training. **We will, therefore, make funding available from the Innovation Programme to support the development and commissioning of care leaver SIBs over the rest of this Parliament to test new approaches to support care leavers.** In order to enable bidders to submit expressions of interest, we will be running an additional bidding round into the Innovation Programme in the autumn in which organisations interested in running a care leaver SIB will be able to apply for funding to help to pay for its set up and to provide outcomes payments.

## Providing a stronger offer for those leaving residential care

- 2.15 Care leavers have told us that having a safe, secure and stable place to live is essential if they are to sustain education, training or employment; experience positive emotional health and well-being; and avoid safeguarding risks. The *Staying Put* duty, introduced in 2014, requires local authorities to provide support so that care leavers can continue to live with their former foster carers. However, there has been no equivalent provision in place for young people leaving residential care.
- 2.16 Sir Martin Narey considered this issue in his recent report on children’s residential care<sup>21</sup>. As he noted, young people leaving children’s homes require as much support, if not more, than their counterparts who have been looked after in foster care. He was clear that the need for nurturing, consistent relationships does not stop when young people leave care; and that more needs to be done to avoid a cliff edge for those leaving residential care.
- 2.17 His report recommended that the government should introduce ‘*Staying Close*’ – an alternative to *Staying Put* – designed specifically for young people leaving residential care. This would allow young people to live independently, but in a location very close to the children’s home they lived in previously. They would

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<sup>21</sup> [Residential care in England, Report of Sir Martin Narey’s independent review of children’s residential care](#), Sir Martin Narey, 2016



continue to have the support of the same team and same key worker, and would be able to visit the home frequently, to experience the continuity and more gradual transition to independence that those leaving foster care enjoy when they move into a Staying Put arrangement.

- 2.18 In response to Sir Martin's specific recommendation, **we are making a commitment to introduce Staying Close for young people leaving residential care**. As Sir Martin also recommends, we are first going to pilot variations of the scheme, through opening a specific stream of the Innovation Programme, in order to understand the costings, practicalities and impact of this measure.
- 2.19 Later sections of this document say more about the work we have been doing with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) more widely to ensure that accommodation for care leavers is both suitable and affordable.

## **Empowering Care Leavers to Provide and Design Services for Themselves**

**Being empowered was a strong theme in our consultations with care leavers. It is also judged to be a key component of many of the most interesting innovations that are currently being taken forward in the sector.**

The 'HOUSE Project' in Stoke has involved setting up a housing co-operative led by young care leavers using homes owned by the council.

Care leavers lead the co-operative and have access to a purpose-designed skills and training programme to help them do this (and to build skills related to the co-operative), building their capacity, social skills and employability in the process. Young people are able to retain their tenancy as long as they want to. As they move out of the co-operative, but want to keep their home, new local-authority owned houses are released to the co-operative to maintain the stock of 10 tenancies for care leavers.

As well as helping care leavers with their accommodation needs, the project gives them the opportunity to experience the control, ownership and pride in doing things for themselves that have been missing from their lives.

- 2.20 The New Belongings programme is another example of care leavers themselves being empowered to drive change in the services they receive. A national group

of care leavers was paid as consultants to work with care leavers in the local area they were supporting, to audit what care leavers thought about the services they received and to work with the senior managers in the council to develop a stronger local offer. This DfE-funded programme worked with 29 local authorities over two years and many of the participating authorities continue to work together in clusters to share practice and what works. **Subject to the outcome of the independent evaluation of New Belongings, we are keen to expand this approach – which puts care leavers in the ‘driving seat’ – to an increasing number of local authorities.**

## Preparing care leavers for the challenges of living independently

*“When leaving care I was not ready or prepared for what lay ahead for me. Living in my own flat at the age of 18, I felt alone and unsupported. I always came across as older for my age so I think it was assumed I would be ok. However I was far from ok.”* Care leaver.

2.21 Care leavers consistently tell us that they were not sufficiently prepared for the realities of living independently. In particular, they report experiencing difficulties in relation to budgeting, household maintenance and how to access universal services. Many local authorities already provide support of this kind and **we are interested in how we might use the Innovation Programme to scale-up approaches that have been successful.**

## Supporting care leavers who are young parents

2.22 Section 3 of this document sets out the universal and targeted services that are in place to support care leavers who are parents to give their children the best start in life. However, for a minority of care leavers with complex problems, getting pregnant and subsequently having their children taken into care can become a pattern that requires a different response. Programmes such as PAUSE, which originated in Hackney and has been extended to six other local authority areas supported by funding from the DfE Innovation Programme, work intensively with young women in this situation to prevent repeat pregnancies and subsequent removal of their children into care. **We want to extend approaches like PAUSE into new areas to break this inter-generational cycle of care.**

### 3. EMBEDDING A CULTURE OF CORPORATE PARENTING

- 3.1 Everyone in society has a responsibility to help those who have been in care to overcome the difficulties that they experienced in their childhoods, so that they can lead successful lives – it is not something that government alone can achieve.
- 3.2 As this section will show, government departments and their agencies can play a vital role by shaping their policies so that they give care leavers a helping hand. The voluntary sector plays a unique role, providing opportunities for care leavers to develop skills, confidence and resilience through their programmes for vulnerable young people. Private businesses can offer care leavers opportunities to gain work experience or to take up apprenticeships; and individual volunteers, including those who have a care experience themselves, can act as mentors or champions for care leavers.
- 3.3 But more than anything else, the local help and support that care leavers receive from their local authority leaving care team is critical to whether care leavers make the transition from care to independence successfully.
- 3.4 This section sets out the action we will take to help care leavers to overcome the problems identified in Section 1:

#### Outcome 1: Better prepared and supported to live independently

*“Over the past year the best thing for me has been my support worker with all the support she has given me I feel like you have built up a good relationship with her and I feel like if I have any queries I can always go to her about them so it has been nice to build up a good relationship with someone who I can trust.”* Care Leaver

- 3.5 We want the legislative framework that applies to leaving care services to ensure that care leavers are given the high quality support they need to succeed. Building on the Staying Put duty that was introduced in 2014, we are introducing three new legislative provisions in the Children and Social Work Bill<sup>22</sup> to add to the entitlements that care leavers already benefit from.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/childrenandsocialwork.html>

## Corporate Parenting Principles

- 3.6 For the first time, we will set out in law what it means for a local authority to be a good corporate parent, through a set of corporate parenting principles that guide how local authorities should act when providing services and support to the young people leaving their care. The principles will apply to all of the services that the local authority provides – not just the Children’s Services department – so that, for example, Housing Services (including those delivered by district councils) and Leisure Services also deliver their services to care leavers in a way that: promotes their best interests; responds to their wishes and feelings; helps them to make the best use of local authority services; promotes high aspirations and the best possible outcomes for them; provides them with stability; and supports their transition to adulthood. These principles will apply to both children in care and care leavers.
- 3.7 The principles will embed in every local authority what we, and Ofsted, have already seen in the best performing local authorities like Trafford, where from the Chief Executive down there is a commitment within the council to giving care leavers the best possible chance to succeed, including ring-fencing apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers and giving them free access to the borough’s leisure centres.
- 3.8 Other authorities are thinking hard about what it truly means to be a corporate parent, looking at it through the lens of what any reasonable parent does to give their child the best start in life. For many of our young people that means providing some financial support when they first live independently and are in a job at the bottom of their career ladder. So, for example, North Somerset has taken the decision that its care leavers should not have to pay Council Tax until they reach age 22. **We would encourage all local authorities to consider how they can support their care leavers like this, using the flexibilities at their disposal.** Further examples are provided later in this Section.

## Care Leaver Covenant

- 3.9 The corporate parenting principles will apply to local authorities. But we want other public, private and charitable bodies to be able to set out how, as members of civil society, they too will make a commitment to support care leavers. **So we will introduce a new voluntary care leaver covenant that organisations can sign up to in a way that makes sense to them. We plan to launch the covenant during ‘care leavers’ week’ in October 2016.**
- 3.10 The covenant will provide an opportunity for central government departments to set out the services and support that they offer care leavers. **The Cabinet Office, for example, has already made a commitment that every child in care or care**

**leaver aged 16 or 17 has a guaranteed place on the National Citizen Service programme.**

- 3.11 The voluntary and charitable sectors already play a key role in both supporting individual care leavers to develop skills and confidence, as well as providing support materials that allow frontline practitioners to develop ways of working with care leavers that take account of their unique experiences. We want to harness all this energy and enthusiasm, working in partnership with voluntary sector and charities to promote the covenant and to encourage others to get behind it.
- 3.12 We will also use the covenant to build on successful work with employers who have provided opportunities to care leavers, such as those provided by the Marriott Hotel chain through the 'From Care2Work' programme, funded by DfE. But the role of businesses could potentially go beyond offering work opportunities and we will be exploring how the private sector could help to make the transition to adulthood and independence easier for care leavers.

### **Care Leaver Local Offer**

- 3.13 One of the most common concerns raised by care leavers is that they are not aware of either their legal entitlements, or the wider support that is available to them locally. **Our second legislative change, therefore, will be to place a requirement on local authorities to consult on, and then publish a local offer for care leavers.** This will complement the local offer already in place covering the education, health and social care services available for children and young people who have Special Educational Needs or are disabled.
- 3.14 Many local authorities already have forums that allow care leavers to feed back views on their leaving care support; and to find out more about what support is available to them. And many authorities also consult their care leavers about what additional support they would find helpful. Our legislation will formalise that process where it currently happens and extend it to every local authority, so that every care leaver in the country is aware of the support that they can expect.
- 3.15 As well as setting out care leavers' legal entitlements, including its policy on Staying Put, the local offer will describe the other non-statutory services that the local authority leaving care team provides specifically for care leavers, such as health drop-in sessions. It will also set out how relevant universal services could support care leavers' transitions to adulthood, such as careers advice services for all young people. The requirement to publish the local offer will bring greater transparency and allow local authorities to learn about services that are being provided in other local areas.

## Extending support from a Personal Adviser to all care leavers to age 25

- 3.16 At present, all care leavers receive support from a local authority Personal Adviser to age 21. The Personal Adviser helps the care leaver to make the transition to independence, using a 'pathway plan' to identify the steps the young person needs to take to achieve their goals; and how the local authority will support them to do so.
- 3.17 If a care leaver remains in or returns to education, support from their Personal Adviser continues up to age 25. But other care leavers, including those who are (NEET), are not currently entitled to continuing support. **In recognition of the extra vulnerability of those who are NEET and the fact that many young people in the wider population continue to get support from their parents until their mid-twenties, we are extending support for all care leavers to age 25.** We will provide additional funding for local authorities to implement this new duty.

## Outcome 2: Improved access to education, training and employment

*"Instead of saying that all care leavers should be in education, employment or training, they should say, step-by-step, let's look at ways of doing it.....if we don't do that stuff (education and training) then we just continue the stereotype. We need to be encouraged to challenge the stereotype!"* Care Leaver

- 3.18 For the period ending March 2016, we are collecting data on 17 and 18 year-old care leavers for the first time (to be published in October 2016). Combining this with the data that we already collect on 19, 20 and 21 year-olds will give us a much clearer picture of care leavers' career progression as they leave care and move towards independence.
- 3.19 What we do know about the activity of 19 to 21 year-old care leavers in the year ending March 2015 is that, at this stage in their journey: 6% are in HE; 18% are in other types of education; 23% are in training or employment; and 39% are NEET, of which around a third are NEET due to disability or young parenthood<sup>23</sup>.
- 3.20 We want to help all care leavers to reach their full potential, whether that is going to college or university, taking up an apprenticeship or getting a skilled job. That will require a range of approaches: supporting those with high potential to achieve,

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<sup>23</sup> Statistics about the care leaver cohort taken from the Department for Education's [Statistical First Release for children looked-after in England \(including adoption\) 2014-15](#)

as well as removing barriers for those who have either fallen behind or need extra support to remain in education or training.

- 3.21 While we have introduced a number of recent reforms to improve the educational attainment of children in care – including making it a statutory requirement that local authorities appoint a Virtual School Head to raise attainment of looked after children; and providing £1,900 a year extra to schools to support the progress of every Looked After Child on their register, through the Pupil Premium Plus – it is still the case that only 14% of children in care achieved 5 good GCSEs in 2015, compared to 53% of non-looked after children<sup>24</sup>.
- 3.22 This limits the options open to care leavers when they leave school and requires us to think creatively about how we provide the opportunities for care leavers to catch up on education that they have missed out on; and to develop the essential knowledge and skills that will enable them to make progress. This provision must be flexible enough to respond to the needs of individual care leavers (for example through allowing the length of courses to be extended so that additional support can be provided).

## Work-based Learning

- 3.23 The government has asked Lord Sainsbury to review technical education, including the needs of young people who are not ready to access a technical qualification at age 16 (or older if their education has been delayed). The government's response to this challenge will be set out in 'The Skills Plan', which will be published shortly.
- 3.24 Care leavers with Education, Health and Care Plans or statements of SEN who need more help to make the transition from education into employment can access supported internship study programmes. Based primarily at an employer, they are tailored to the individual needs of a young person to equip them with the skills they need for the workplace. The young person and the employer will receive support from an expert job coach throughout. **We will provide Personal Advisers with more information on supported internships so that they can be promoted to care leavers who would benefit from this sort of intensive support.**
- 3.25 The government is committed to reaching 3 million apprenticeship starts in England by 2020. Under apprenticeship frameworks, funding for the costs of training is covered for all 16-18 year-olds. The same level of funding is in place for

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<sup>24</sup> Statistics about care leaver cohort taken from the Department of Education's [Statistical First Release Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 31 March 2015](#)

apprentices aged 19-23 who are care leavers. As an incentive to employers to recruit more care leavers, and in line with wider government policy, **we will now extend this further to all care leavers up to age 25**. This provision will also be in place for apprenticeships delivered under standards (the new employer-designed, higher quality apprenticeships). The introduction of the apprenticeship levy in April 2017 will mean that the way apprenticeships are funded will be changing. We will publish more information about the new funding arrangements shortly.

- 3.26 We have been asked throughout the development of this strategy document whether we can require companies bidding for public procurement contracts to offer apprenticeships for care leavers. Under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015<sup>25</sup>, account can already be taken on a case by case basis of wider social benefits, including workforce composition, within the tendering process where these link sufficiently to the subject matter of the contract in question. **We have recently been successful in including apprenticeships and skills development considerations as a whole in government procurements with a value of £10 million and above.**
- 3.27 We are also aware that the Children's Commissioner's office will shortly be publishing a report on widening access to apprenticeships for children in care and care leavers. We welcome this and will give careful consideration to its recommendations so as to try to find new ways of increasing opportunities for children in or leaving care to take up apprenticeships.

## Further Education

- 3.28 For many care leavers, their progression route from school will be to a further education (FE) college. All 19-23 year-olds are entitled to free education and training to achieve their first full Level 2 or 3 qualification, and all adults are entitled to free English and maths up to Level 2. Care leavers are a priority group for financial support through the 16-19 Bursary Fund administered by FE colleges, to help with the costs of studying and to help support care leavers' retention in learning. Following our recent reforms to the Special Educational Needs (SEN) system, those care leavers with SEN and Disabilities who need longer to complete and consolidate their education, are now able to maintain their Education, Health and Care Plans until the age of 25 where needed, so that they get the support that they need to achieve their education and training outcomes.

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<sup>25</sup> [Public Contracts Regulations, 2015](#)



3.29 The Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) is funding the Learning & Work Institute (LWI) to **deliver a programme of work to support care leavers' access to, and achievement in FE, employment and apprenticeships**. This will include:

- The development of an existing BIS guide for care leavers into an interactive resource which provides care leavers and their Personal Advisers with essential information about: what courses are available and their progression routes; sources of advice and support (including financial support); and case studies, all of which would support pathway planning for care leavers;
- Working with employers and others to identify effective approaches to enable care leavers to gain experience of the workplace and progress towards employment/apprenticeships, possibly through traineeship opportunities. The outputs will include case studies and a resource for employers;
- Promoting and sharing examples of best practice in engaging and supporting care leavers to succeed in FE.

3.30 We know that many care leavers' lives begin to become more settled when they reach their late teens and early twenties and it is only at this point that they feel ready to return to education. To support care leavers up to age 21 who wish to catch up on the education they may have missed out on when they were younger, Income Support/Universal Credit is available to care leavers who take up full time study in non-advanced education (i.e. secondary level education). Because Universal Credit work related requirements are tailored based on individual characteristics, care leavers who take up full time study will not have requirements applied.

*"It's really important to give Care Leavers a chance to go to university when they are a bit older. When we first leave Care, just sorting out our life is the first priority - finding a home, a job, learning to function independently, finding friends, building a community, perhaps marriage and/or having kids-- all those things tend to come first when you don't have 'roots'. For many of us it's important to get these essentials sorted first, and then we can think about furthering our education."* Care Leaver

3.31 The data we collect does not currently tell us how many care leavers have taken advantage of this opportunity; or allow us to evaluate the impact of this provision, but we are committed to continuing to work with DWP to provide this evidence. DWP is willing to explore what more can be done in the benefits system to support those wishing to return to education beyond age 21 and up to age 25.

## Higher Education

- 3.32 The government is committed to widening access to higher education (HE) for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including care leavers. A key driver for widening participation is through 'access agreements' that are agreed by the independent Director for Fair Access (DfA). The DfA has agreed 183 access agreements for 2016/17, which **include plans for universities to spend more than £745 million on measures to improve access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds**. Support for care leavers in access agreements has grown considerably over the years, with around 80% of access agreements including specific action on supporting care leavers.
- 3.33 The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) **has included a Care Leaver identifier as part of the HESA student record, which will support better analysis, research and evaluation for care leavers**. This will also enable more robust monitoring of sector performance in supporting care leavers, including through access agreements. **The government has also funded a National Network for the Education of Care Leavers**, which provides HE activities and resources for care leavers, children in care and the people who support them, which can be accessed at: <http://nnecl.org/about/background>.

## Employment

- 3.34 Care Leavers will often need extra help to find work. Jobcentre Plus has introduced a 'marker' that allows care leavers to be identified on their system and receive additional help. We want to ensure that as many care leavers as possible benefit from the support that is available, and **we will continue to work with DWP to explore the potential for better sharing of data, both between DfE and DWP analysts to support better tracking of care leavers' long-term outcomes; and between local authorities and local Jobcentre Plus offices, to support better joint working**.
- 3.35 The benefits of that improved joint working at a local level is evident in the arrangements in Barnet, known as 'The Barnet Hub Model', where, funded by the Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support Fund, a Jobcentre Plus Work Coach is co-located in the local authority leaving care team, along with a care leaver charity called Drive Forward, who deliver an intensive, 1-2-1 employability programme. This model, which began in late 2014, has already helped over 70 care leavers into work. DWP has run a number of events to raise awareness of this model across the Jobcentre Plus network.

## **Barnet Care Leaver Hub Case Study**

Kemi was placed in care at age 14. When she left college at age 18, staff at the Barnet Care Leaver Hub supported Kemi in finding full time work.

*“Upon graduating from college at age 18, I met Patricia, my Jobcentre Plus work coach at the Barnet Care Leaver Hub. Patricia was a breath of fresh air, nice, calm and welcoming to my situation. I felt I could talk and engage with her and in doing so I saw my confidence grow. Patricia introduced me to Sam from the Drive Forward team and together they helped me work on my CV. They became a driving force in making me proactive with my job searches and with their help and support I am now working full time.*

*I can only say ‘thank you both’ for making all this possible, your interaction and commitment at the Hub not only makes me a success but is commendable. The support Patricia has given me goes far beyond anything I have received before; she’d call to check how work is going, advising me on financial matters and reminding me that rent has to be paid as always. Thank you Patricia and Sam.”*

3.36 To support all young people aged 18 to 21 who are unemployed, the Youth Obligation will be introduced from April 2017. This will mean that:

- From ‘Day 1’ of their claim, 18 to 21year-olds will participate in a three-week Intensive Activity Period of support, learning job-search and interview techniques; and structured work preparation. They will be encouraged to apply for an apprenticeship, or take up work experience opportunities, sector-based work academy placements and other work-related training;
- If they are still claiming benefit after six months, and are not in work, on an apprenticeship or participating in work-related training, they will be required to go on a mandatory work placement to give them the skills they need to get on in work;
- Tailored, flexible support will be provided to those in work, but who need to increase their earnings.

3.37 Recognising that there will be some care leavers who need to address complex barriers in order to achieve sustainable employment and transform their life chances, Universal Credit is complemented by Universal Support. Universal Support is there to help people make and maintain their Universal Credit claim, and will assist people with their financial and digital capability throughout the life of their claim. Through Universal Support, DWP is transforming the way job centres work as part of their local communities to ensure they more effectively tackle the

barriers faced by harder to help people and get them into sustainable employment. DWP are considering how best to broaden this approach to help claimants with multiple, complex barriers into sustainable employment.

- 3.38 DWP introduced the Youth Engagement Fund (YEF) in April 2015, to deliver support to young people aged 14-17 years for up to three years. Two out of the four YEF projects target support on young people who are in care or on the edge of care. The aim is to enable young people to succeed in education or training, improving their employability and reducing their longer-term dependency on benefits as well as their likelihood of offending.
- 3.39 The new care leaver covenant will provide a way of expanding employment opportunities for young people leaving care. We know that many local authorities already offer opportunities for care leavers when they are recruiting to traineeships and apprenticeships. We would encourage all local authorities to do so. We also acknowledge that government departments and their agencies could play a greater role in offering work experience, traineeships, apprenticeships and jobs to care leavers and we will consider and discuss with stakeholders how best to ensure that this happens in practice.

### **Outcome 3: Experiencing stability and feeling safe and secure**

*“Because I am worried about moving out and having to live on my own without a choice in the matter, people who are not in care get to stay with their parents until they feel ready to move out and I feel that I am nowhere near ready to leave but I don’t have a choice in the matter.”* Young person in care

#### **A safe and stable place to live**

- 3.40 Local authority Children’s Services are responsible for accommodating 16 and 17 year-old care leavers. Statutory guidance<sup>26</sup> states that this accommodation must be safe, secure and affordable; and the guidance was updated in 2015 to make clear that ‘Bed & Breakfast’ (B&B) accommodation should only be used in exceptional circumstances and for no more than two working days. Ofsted reports that the use of B&B is rare in nearly all local authorities that it has inspected.
- 3.41 The majority of young people remain in care until 18 and are either in foster care or residential care. However, for some young people in care and all care leavers aged 16 or 17 who do not return home to their family, they are normally housed in

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<sup>26</sup> [The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers](#)

a range of different types of accommodation settings, including: supported lodgings, semi-independent accommodation, foyers, supported housing and hostels. Much of this provision is good quality and provides the sort of stepping-stone provision, with support, that care leavers need to transition successfully to independent living.

- 3.42 However, during our consultations with care leavers, we also heard examples of poor quality alternative accommodation, some of which had placed care leavers at risk of exploitation, or had led to deterioration in their emotional health and well-being; or to them experiencing problems with drugs or alcohol. It is vitally important, therefore, that local authorities commission accommodation services in ways that ensure that providers are equipped to respond to young peoples' complex needs and operate in accordance with local safeguarding arrangements.
- 3.43 When care leavers turn 18, Children's Services are normally no longer legally responsible for accommodating them unless they are in a Staying Put arrangement (see below). However, there remains a key role for local authority leaving care teams to continue to work closely with Housing Services colleagues to ensure that 16 and 17 year-old care leavers remain in suitable accommodation when they turn 18, using the sort of options listed above; or, if they are ready, to help them to secure and maintain an independent tenancy. Helping care leavers to understand the options available in their local housing market and to prepare for the challenges of maintaining their own home are a key part of the pathway planning process.

## Staying Put

- 3.44 For those who leave care at age 18 from foster care, the option now exists for them to move into a 'Staying Put' arrangement where both they and their carer want to continue living together. Staying Put provides the sort of gradual transition to adulthood that is enjoyed by the majority of young people in the general population. It provides continuity of a supportive relationship and care arrangements and we want to maximise the number of eligible care leavers who do Stay Put.
- 3.45 In the first year following the introduction of the duty on local authorities to support Staying Put arrangements, nearly half (48%) of eligible care leavers were living with their former foster carer 3 months after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday<sup>27</sup>. **We will**

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<sup>27</sup> Statistics about the care leaver cohort taken from the Department for Education's [Statistical First Release for children looked-after in England \(including adoption\) 2014-15](#)

**continue to provide funding to local authorities to implement Staying Put over the life of this Parliament, using the £22m provided in 2016/17 as the baseline.** We also want to review the implementation of Staying Put and will work with the sector to iron out any implementation issues that the review identifies.

## Staying Close

3.46 As highlighted in section 2, in response to Sir Martin Narey's recommendation in his recent report on children's residential care in England<sup>28</sup>, **we are making a commitment to introduce Staying Close for young people leaving residential care.** Staying Close – similar to the Staying Put arrangements which exist for children in foster care – will enable young people to live independently, in a location close to their children's home with ongoing support from that home. As Sir Martin recommends we are going to pilot variations of the scheme first, through opening a specific stream of the Innovation Programme, in order to understand the costings, practicalities and impact.

## Preventing homelessness

3.47 During the year ending March 2015, our data show that over 90% of care leavers for whom information was provided were in suitable accommodation. Less than 1% were recorded as being in Bed & Breakfast accommodation. Around 4% were in custody and 1% were recorded as having no fixed abode or were homeless<sup>29</sup>. Where care leavers over 18 are homeless, in recognition of their vulnerability they are given automatic priority need within the homelessness legislation until age 22. Care leavers above the age of 21 who are vulnerable as a result of having been looked after also have a priority need. Care leavers are also a priority group within statutory guidance on the allocation of 'social housing'.

3.48 Whilst the legislation provides a crucial safety net, our priority is to stop homelessness happening in the first place. Government is investing over £500 million more over this Parliament to prevent and tackle homelessness. Local housing authorities are required to produce a strategy setting out how they will prevent and tackle homelessness in their area. As part of this process, they should work with Children's Services to consider the needs of care leavers who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness.

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<sup>28</sup> [Residential care in England, Report of Sir Martin Narey's independent review of children's residential care](#), Sir Martin Narey, 2016

<sup>29</sup> Statistics about the care leaver cohort taken from the Department for Education's [Statistical First Release for children looked-after in England \(including adoption\) 2014-15](#)

3.49 This focus on prevention fits well with the approach that has been promoted in the ‘Supported Accommodation Framework’<sup>30</sup> for care leavers developed by Barnardo’s and St Basils, with funding from DCLG. We have been working with local authorities to bring Children’s and Housing Services together to focus on solutions to the housing problems that care leavers experience, using the Framework to guide that work; **and DCLG has committed funding to continue to support English local authorities to implement the Framework in 2016/17.**

**NB: Issues related to the affordability of housing are covered in a later section on achieving financial stability.**

## Keeping care leavers safe from harm

3.50 A combination of care leavers’ previous experiences and their current circumstances can put them at greater risk of exploitation. The Home Office (HO) is leading work to help prevent children and young people from being recruited into gangs, being sexually exploited and/or abusing drugs or alcohol.

3.51 The exploitation of vulnerable young people and adults is often a feature of urban street gangs. Children in care and care leavers are at higher risk of being groomed and/or coerced into moving or selling drugs around the country (known as ‘county lines’). It is important that those looking after vulnerable young people understand about ‘county lines’, how to recognise it and how to prevent and protect young people from being targeted and exploited by gangs.

3.52 The Home Office’s approach to Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation was published on 13 January 2016<sup>31</sup> and sets out the six key priorities for tackling this issue: tackling county lines; protecting vulnerable locations; reducing violence and knife crime; safe-guarding gang-associated women and girls; promoting early intervention; and promoting meaningful alternatives to gangs. The Home Office will work with DfE and DCLG to identify what more can be done to highlight the risks and tackle this issue locally, including identifying and spreading best practice.

3.53 The number of recorded child sexual abuse offences has increased rapidly over the last two years. Research regularly finds that children in care and care leavers are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse/exploitation. For example, based on submissions provided, the Office of the Children’s Commissioner for England’s enquiry into sexual exploitation in gangs and groups found that 21% of identified victims were in the care system. And we know from local intelligence that

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<sup>30</sup> [Care Leavers Accomodation And Support Framework](#), Barnardo’s, 2015

<sup>31</sup> [Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation](#), Home Office, 2016

children's homes are being targeted by perpetrators of child sexual exploitation. We know from speaking to local practitioners and victims that a person does not stop being vulnerable as soon as they turn 18. It is important that young people have access to support when leaving care.

3.54 The Home Secretary launched the report 'Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation' in March 2015<sup>32</sup>. This report sets out a national response to the failures seen in Rotherham, Manchester, Oxford and elsewhere, where children were let down by the very people who were responsible for protecting them. The Government has made significant progress since the report was launched:

- We have prioritised child sexual abuse as a national threat in the Strategic Policing Requirement<sup>33</sup>, setting a clear expectation that forces should safeguard children, share intelligence and best practice and collaborate across force boundaries.
- We have delivered additional funding of £10 million in 2015-16 for further specialist teams in the National Crime Agency to tackle online child sexual exploitation, enabling a near doubling of their investigative capability.
- We have delivered a £7 million uplift in funding in 2015-16 for non statutory organisations which support victims and survivors of sexual abuse and confirmed continuation of this £7m fund in 2016-17.
- We have launched a new national whistle-blowing helpline, operated by the NSPCC, for any employee who wants to raise a concern about how their organisation is dealing with a concern about a child. This offers a new, additional, confidential route and will help shine a light on problems and help authorities to spot patterns of failure in order to address them quickly.
- We have piloted joint official health, police and education inspections in a series of six inspections which will be completed by July. This series of inspections will focus on the quality of frontline practice in dealing with child sexual exploitation.

3.55 The Home Office will continue to work closely with the DfE to ensure robust measures are in place to tackle child sexual exploitation including victimisation of children leaving care.

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<sup>32</sup> [Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation](#), Home Office, 2015

<sup>33</sup> [Strategic Policing Requirement](#), updated 2015



## Supporting care leavers in the criminal justice system

- 3.56 We know that both children in care and care leavers are over-represented in the criminal justice system. The Prison Reform Trust's inquiry<sup>34</sup>, led by Lord Laming, has examined why that is the case, including whether they are more likely to be criminalised for relatively minor incidents of criminal damage or aggressive behaviour that would not normally result in police involvement if they occurred in a family home. **We have welcomed the Prison Reform Trust's interest in this issue and will consider the findings from Lord Laming's inquiry alongside the recent report from Sir Martin Narey on residential care for looked-after children, and the forthcoming report by Charlie Taylor on the youth justice system.**
- 3.57 The Ministry of Justice is reforming the prison system so that offenders, including care leavers, can get the skills and qualifications they need to make a success of life on the outside. Central to the reforms is giving prison governors greater autonomy. Governors will have a greater role in determining rehabilitation services, providing the opportunity to innovate and tailor education and training approaches to the needs of offenders.
- 3.58 In September 2015, the Secretary of State for Justice announced that Charlie Taylor would be conducting a review of the youth justice system<sup>35</sup>. The review is examining how children who offend are rehabilitated in the community and in custody, and whether the system remains fit for the challenges posed by today's young offenders. An interim report was published in February setting out emerging proposals for secure schools for young offenders remanded or sentenced to custody, and an ambition for a more devolved youth justice system.
- 3.59 In 2013, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) appointed a National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Care Leaver Champion – Teresa Clarke, Governor of Swinfen Hall Youth Offending Institute – and has built on this by putting in place a network of regional leads for custodial and probation services.
- 3.60 MoJ has also established a National Care Leavers' Forum within NOMS, bringing together key stakeholders to co-ordinate efforts to support care leavers in prison and probation. The forum has agreed five priority areas upon which its work will focus; identification, recording, entitlements, support and wider awareness. The Forum's efforts have resulted in new data fields being added to prison and probation systems to enable recording of care leaver status. **To ensure care**

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<sup>34</sup> [In Care, Out of Trouble, an independent review Chaired by Lord Laming](#)

<sup>35</sup> [Written Statement to Parliament, Youth Justice, September 2015](#)

**leavers receive the support they need, regional training events are being held to raise awareness of care leavers' unique status and their entitlements among prison and probation staff.**

- 3.61 The NOMS care leaver forum provides a way of developing better joint working arrangements between local authorities, prisons and probation services. Local authorities are required to continue supporting care leavers while they are in prison and should visit them to see how they are getting on and to update their pathway plan. This has not always happened consistently. Last year we revised guidance to local authorities to make clear that those in custody who were pursuing a course of education should continue to be entitled to Personal Adviser support, up until age 25.
- 3.62 **The Forum will continue to explore ways of improving communication channels, so that local authorities are updated if a care leaver is moved to a different prison; and are notified in advance when a care leaver is released from prison, so that they have time to put a package of support in place when they return, including a place to live.** The Forum will also explore how best to integrate pathway and sentencing plans so that they are coherent and so that Personal Advisers can work together with those in prison and probation responsible for the young person's progress.
- 3.63 **As part of its commitment to better support the care leavers it looks after, NOMS will through the Forum pursue avenues for enabling direct work with care leavers in prisons which supports them to develop strategies that will help them to succeed when they leave prison or probation services.**

## **Supporting refugee and other foreign national care leavers**

- 3.64 Unaccompanied children arriving in the UK are immediately transferred into the care of a local authority. The crisis in Syria and events in the Middle East have seen an unprecedented number of migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Europe. Some have gone on to reach the UK via northern France, including many who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).
- 3.65 Local authorities are therefore looking after increasing numbers of UASC and supporting more care leavers who are former UASC. There were 3,206 asylum claims from UASC in the year ending March 2016, a 57% increase on the year ending March 2015<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> [Home Office Immigration Statistics, January to March 2016, Asylum Data, Volume 3](#)

- 3.66 This increase has placed pressure on some local authorities with high numbers of UASC in their care. That is why **we are introducing a national transfer scheme, underpinned by powers in the Immigration Act 2016. From 1 July 2016, the Home Office has also significantly increased the funding local authorities will receive for caring for UASC and for supporting former UASC.**
- 3.67 Most UASC are granted refugee status, humanitarian protection or some other form of leave to remain in the UK (73% of initial decisions in the year ending March 2016)<sup>37</sup>. Effective pathway planning for UASC should take into account the child's immigration status, support timely engagement with the Home Office to resolve any outstanding immigration issues, and look ahead to their long-term future in the UK or to the possibility that they will be expected to make plans to leave the UK and resume life in their home country if they have no lawful basis to remain here.
- 3.68 For those former UASC care leavers whom the courts agree do not need our protection, and who have no lawful basis to remain in the UK, the Immigration Act 2016<sup>38</sup> makes alternative provision for any accommodation, subsistence or other social care support the local authority considers they need prior to their departure from the UK. This could include, for example, support from a Personal Adviser. The DfE and the Home Office will be working together with local authorities and relevant non-governmental organisations on the development of the regulations and guidance required to implement these new support arrangements. **DfE will consult on revised guidance for local authorities on the care of unaccompanied and trafficked children, later this year.**

## Outcome 4: Improved Access to Health Support

*“There should be more services to talk to when you just need help with your experiences – not necessarily CAMHS.” Care Leaver.*

### Mental Health

- 3.69 At our consultation events, care leavers reported a range of situations where they had experienced poor emotional health and well-being, but failed to get the support that they needed. For most, this was linked to feeling lonely and isolated, causing them to feel depressed, anxious or to have a lack of confidence. But some care leavers reported more serious cases of committing self-harm, suicidal thoughts or more serious personality disorders. Older care leavers reported

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<sup>37</sup> [Home Office Immigration Statistics, January to March 2016, Asylum Data, Volume 3](#)

<sup>38</sup> [Immigration Act 2016](#)

particular problems accessing adult services, due to the higher thresholds involved.

- 3.70 We recognise that making the transition from being in care to living independently at a young age can be particularly challenging for care leavers who are receiving support to improve their emotional health and well-being, as it often coincides with a transition from CAMHS to adult mental health services.
- 3.71 The government set out its plans to improve our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing in the 2015 report *Future in mind – promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing*<sup>39</sup>. The report sets out that significant improvements can be achieved through better working between the NHS, local authorities, voluntary and community services, schools and other local services. It also makes it clear that many of these changes can be achieved by working differently, rather than needing significant investment.
- 3.72 **The Government is committed to implementing the vision set out in *Future in mind*, and is making available an additional £1.4 billion over the lifetime of this Parliament to support improvements to Child and Adolescent Mental Health services.** In October 2015, local areas in England were required to submit Local Transformation Plans (LTPs) for child and adolescent mental health, setting out how they will improve the emotional health and well-being of children and young people in their area, and support those with mental health problems, across the whole care pathway.
- 3.73 An Expert Group has been set up to produce care pathways, quality standards and models of care for looked after children and care leavers with mental health problems. This will consider the best way of improving outcomes for care leavers based on the evidence available. **Guidance will be produced for professionals working with care leavers and for commissioners responsible for their care.** The first meeting of the Expert Working Group, which will work with NHS England, Health Education England, and sector partners, will take place in July 2016. The Group will draw up care pathways and a quality standard and will consider the most appropriate models of care for these groups. Their work is expected to take approximately 18 months.
- 3.74 Transition to adult mental health services is something that the Expert Working Group will be considering. We are aware that some areas are already

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<sup>39</sup> [\*Future in mind - promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing\*](#), Department of Health, 2015

reconfiguring their services. In Sheffield for example, a community psychiatric nurse is available to care leavers for consultation within the care leaver team to help them gain access to adult mental health if this is needed, as well as providing one-to-one support. And in Birmingham, services are being provided for children and young people with mental health problems up to the age of 25, to ensure continuity of care and to prevent people having to transfer to adult services automatically at the age of 18. The government encourages innovative local approaches to handling transitions. Whilst it has not mandated a 'one size fits all' approach, we are clear that the principles of good transition planning should be applied: built around the individual, commencing in good time and with strong inter-agency engagement.

- 3.75 **The new Mental Health Services Data Set will collect a comprehensive range of data about children and young people's access to, and outcomes from, mental health services, including for children who are looked-after.** These data will help inform future delivery of services to this vulnerable group of children and young people. In addition, we have asked the new Expert Working Group for looked after children to explore improving the use of information on outcomes for looked after children.

## Wider health issues

- 3.76 Statutory guidance on *Promoting the health and well-being of looked after children*<sup>40</sup> requires local authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups and NHS England to ensure that there are effective plans in place to enable looked-after children aged 16 or 17 to make a smooth transition to adulthood. The statutory guidance on Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies<sup>41</sup> also require health and wellbeing boards to consider the needs of vulnerable groups (such as care leavers) in planning local services.
- 3.77 Since 2013, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) has been inspecting local health service arrangements for promoting the health and wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers. **It will publish an overview report of the first 50 inspections shortly. CQC, Ofsted and the other inspectorates also commenced joint targeted area inspections** later this year.
- 3.78 A third of young people leaving care report problems with drugs or alcohol a year later; indeed, young women leaving care are particularly susceptible to

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<sup>40</sup> [Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked-after Children](#), 2015

<sup>41</sup> [Statutory Guidance on Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies](#), 2013

problematic substance use. Any young person who is at increased risk of substance misuse, including those who are leaving care, should be provided with targeted prevention support, which focuses on reducing risks and strengthening resilience. Clear referral pathways into specialist substance misuse services should be in place for those young people who are assessed as requiring structured drug and alcohol interventions. Young people's specialist substance misuse services are available in every local authority, commissioned by local public health teams.

- 3.79 A quarter of young women leaving care are pregnant, and nearly half become pregnant within 18 to 24 months. To support all young mothers better, the number of health visitors has increased by almost 50% since May 2010. Health visitors deliver the Healthy Child Programme (HCP), a universal service for all families. As part of the HCP, health visitors will identify where families need additional support, and the HCP states clearly that one of the risk factors for experiencing additional problems is where one or both parents grew up in care.
- 3.80 For disadvantaged teenage mothers, the Family Nurse Partnership (FNP)<sup>42</sup> offers an evidence-based, intense programme of supportive visits. The FNP supports many teenage mothers who have a care background. In October 2015, robust new evidence was published on the FNP programme's effectiveness at improving short term outcomes in England. The FNP National Unit is using this evidence to adapt and strengthen the programme so that it provides more flexibility, supporting nurses to tailor the intervention to client needs, in order to help local authorities to develop a service that meets the particular requirements of vulnerable families in their local area.

## Outcome 5: Achieving Financial Stability

*"It's hard for someone (coming out of care) to live on their own, pay bills etc. Someone's not going to say 'here's a tenner – I know you're in arrears with your electricity.'" Care Leaver*

- 3.81 Most care leavers who spoke to us talked about the problems they had making ends meet. Paying rent, Council Tax, household bills and transport costs meant that many care leavers had difficulty managing their finances and they had often experienced debt and arrears.

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<sup>42</sup> [Family Nurse Partnership](#), 2015

## Financial Support

- 3.82 During the last Parliament, the Government introduced Junior ISAs (JISAs) for all children who are looked after for more than 12 months. JISAs are long term saving accounts which can be accessed by the account holder on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. At this point the account will mature into a standard (adult) ISA. Currently over 75,000 accounts have been opened.
- 3.83 Local authorities provide a range of financial support for care leavers. While they are 16 or 17, the local authority is responsible for all of the costs of accommodating them; and provides them with allowances to meet their day to day needs as they are generally not entitled to claim benefits. At the point at which they leave care, care leavers receive a 'leaving care grant' that helps them to furnish their first property. DfE recommends that this should be at least £2,000 and the vast majority of local authorities pay at least that amount. Where care leavers are in further education, they are a priority group for receipt of the 16-19 bursary of up to £1,200 a year; and if they go to University, the local authority is responsible for providing them with an HE bursary of £2,000.
- 3.84 Local authorities also support care leavers financially in lots of different ways. Earlier in this document we provided an example of a local authority – North Somerset – that does not require its care leavers to pay Council Tax until they reach age 22. Many local authorities provide care leavers with free travel passes if they are in education, employment or training. Others provide free access to all of the local authorities' leisure centres. And others still provide care leavers with help to buy clothes for interviews or with the costs of driving lessons where this will help their chances of finding work. We want all local authorities to be thinking creatively about how they can support care leavers in ways that reasonable parents would; and to set this out clearly in their local offers.

## Housing Costs

- 3.85 Care leavers up to the age of 22 who rent privately, are currently exempt from a lower rate of Housing Benefit (known as the shared accommodation rate) which is usually applied to single people aged under 35. Instead, they are able to claim the higher one bedroom rate for self-contained accommodation, rather than the rate for a shared house or flat. Once they reach the age of 22 however, they are entitled to the shared accommodation rate unless one of the other exemptions applies. This could mean that some care leavers at age 22 may need to consider moving to a cheaper property, at a time in their lives when many of them are experiencing stability for the first time since leaving care. DWP and DfE will work together to explore if there is any benefit to care leavers from extending the exemption to the 'shared accommodation rate' to age 25, recognising that many young people in the general population are able to enjoy the stability of living in

the parental home until that age. We will also look at possible ways to collect the relevant data relating to the impact and cost of such a change.

- 3.86 The government plans to introduce changes in April 2017 that will remove automatic entitlement to housing support in Universal Credit in certain circumstances. This will only apply to those making new UC claims; who are out of work, and aged 18 to 21. This is intended to ensure that resources are targeted at those who are most in need, with an expectation that those who can should continue to live at home. This ensures young people on benefits face the same choices as those in work and unable to afford to leave the parental home. **The option to remain living in the family home clearly does not apply to care leavers and we have therefore decided that care leavers will be exempt from these changes.**
- 3.87 The government intends to introduce Local Housing Allowance caps, already an established feature in the private rented sector, into the social rented sector. The changes will take effect in April 2018 and will apply to new tenancies signed from April 2016 onwards (or April 2017 onwards in the case of supported housing).
- 3.88 The supported housing sector, most of which is part of the social rented sector, provides valuable support to some of our country's most vulnerable people, including care leavers. It helps them to lead independent lives or turn their lives around and is an investment which brings savings to other parts of the public sector – such as health and social care. The government has been clear that the most vulnerable will be protected and supported through welfare reforms.
- 3.89 We understand the concerns about the potential implications of the Local Housing Allowance cap; however, there is a need for more robust evidence about the sector, and so a joint evidence review by DWP and DCLG is underway. **Alongside this review, which is due to report shortly, we will continue to work with and listen to the supported housing sector in order to develop a long-term sustainable funding regime.**
- 3.90 We need to deliver a system that provides appropriate protections both for those living in this type of accommodation and those who provide it, whilst also making sure that the taxpayer is protected, the government's fiscal commitments are met and that we deliver value for money.

## Advice and guidance

- 3.91 As part of care leavers' preparation for independence, it is important that Personal Advisers make those in receipt of benefits aware of what they need to do to continue to receive them. There are also many examples of effective local protocols between local authority leaving care teams and local Jobcentre Plus offices, which can help care leavers to understand the conditions around receipt of



benefits and ultimately remove the need to impose a sanction and ensure that they retain entitlement to benefit (including elements intended to meet their housing costs). Care leavers aged 18 or over who receive a sanction may qualify for a hardship payment. They should apply via Jobcentre Plus as soon as they receive their first reduced benefit payment.

- 3.92 Many care leavers will not be able to access advice about their personal finances from parents or family members in the same way that other young people can. It is therefore crucial that Personal Advisers are able to give them good quality information about managing their money, from budgeting to paying bills on time. Through our review of the Personal Adviser role we will consider how we can best ensure that Personal Advisers are equipped to carry out this role.

## **4. DRIVING SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT**

### **Promoting and Sharing Best Practice**

- 4.1 We recognise the need to ensure that decision makers and front line practitioners working with care leavers understand what works – and what doesn't work – and use that knowledge to improve practice.
- 4.2 In the medium-term, we are establishing a new What Works Centre (WWC) for children's social care. It will be an authoritative source of evidence-based advice on what works. Like NICE, it will be able to say clearly which approaches are proven to be effective and should be used. The WWC will support wider reforms for the social work workforce, complementing and strengthening those reforms, in order to create an effective practice environment. We expect the WWC to play a role in harvesting and disseminating the learning from a wide range of interventions.
- 4.3 Before then, we will publish the evaluations of the projects funded from phase 1 of the Innovation Programme that relate to care leavers. We will also shortly be publishing the independent evaluation of the New Belongings project that was commissioned by DfE.
- 4.4 The DfE will continue to work with local authority delivery partners – primarily through the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum – to understand what new challenges local authorities are facing and to work with them to decide how best to address them.
- 4.5 In December 2015, the Prime Minister announced the Partners in Practice (PiP) initiative that will model excellence and innovation in the delivery of children's social care services. The aim is to foster deeper partnerships between the national and local government and to enable and support long-term improvement; the PiPs will be exploring greater freedoms in how they design and deliver their services; provide evidence about new structural models and innovations; and model best practice, share learning and support the wider sector.

### **Supporting and Challenging Local Authorities**

- 4.6 It is important that central government, local authorities and children and young people know how well the care system is working, to share best practice and make improvements when needed. We know a lot about the characteristics of the looked after population but the data does not always give the information we need about the impact of the care system on children and young people, or the outcomes they achieve. To do this, we will focus on measuring the progress

made by children in care and care leavers, as well as continuing to understand their needs and characteristics.

## **Intervening in failure**

4.7 We are strengthening our approach to intervening in councils where they fail to provide adequate services for children in need of help and protection, children in care, or care leavers:

- Wherever Ofsted find children's services to be inadequate, we will provide expert scrutiny to diagnose problems and support the council to produce an effective improvement plan within three months.
- We would expect most of those councils to improve with support and challenge from experts, but councils' progress towards improvement will be reviewed every six months.
- If these reviews find that insufficient progress has been made, we will appoint a children's services commissioner to review whether services should be removed from council control.
- We will also immediately appoint a commissioner wherever council failure is persistent or systemic, with a presumption that the service will be placed outside of the council's control, unless the commissioner identifies good reasons not to do so.
- Where a commissioner concludes that the council does not have the capacity or capability to make the required improvements, we will take action so children's services are removed from council control.

## 5. HOW WE WILL MEASURE PROGRESS

### Outcome Data

- 5.1 DfE will continue to publish care leaver outcome data annually, through a statistical first release, based on data provided by local authorities. For the year ending March 2016, as well as data on 19-21 year-olds, we will also be publishing data for 17 and 18 year-old care leavers. While this data collection provides valuable information, DfE recognises that data collected by other Departments or providers offer the potential to gain a fuller understanding of the outcomes achieved by care leavers. A one-off data sharing agreement is in place with the Ministry of Justice to link pupil level data to prison, probation and police data. We expect the data match to be achieved in 2016. Conditional on the quality of the match and the benefits of the data share, we will consider if a more regular sharing of data would be justified.
- 5.2 A separate agreement is in place with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, the DWP and BIS to explore the link between educational achievement and labour market outcomes. This will be used to improve the quality of destination measures. We will also explore the quality of outcome information this data sharing provides, for specific groups such as care leavers.

### Ofsted Judgements

- 5.3 By the end of 2017, Ofsted will complete inspections in all local authorities under its inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers – *the single inspection framework*. This cycle of inspections will provide the most detailed baseline assessment of children's services to date.
- 5.4 Between June and September 2016, Ofsted will begin to consult on a new approach to the inspection of local authority children's services from 2018. The consultation will include proposals for a more risk-based and proportionate programme of inspection. It is expected that this programme will retain a sharp focus on the experiences and progress of care leavers.

### The Voice of the Care Leaver

- 5.5 There are a number of regular surveys that capture the views and experiences of children in care and care leavers, including the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) 'State of the Nation' report and Ofsted's survey of children in care. We will review how children and young people's views change over time as a way of assessing the impact of the strategy.

- 5.6 We also recognise and support the need for care leavers to have a direct say in shaping and designing the policies that affect them. **To this end, the DfE will set up a national care leaver advisory group, consisting of care leavers aged between 16 and 25, which it will use to gain insight into the issues that affect their lives and to inform the future evolution of this strategy and the development of care leaver policy.**

## Reviewing Progress

- 5.7 The Social Justice Cabinet Committee (SJCC) will provide Ministerial oversight of the strategy. The Minister for Children & Families will produce a progress update to SJCC each year on the implementation of the strategy, as well as possible refinements and updates to it, following the release of the care leaver data that DfE publishes annually in October.
- 5.8 A senior Whitehall officials' group (representing the eight government departments directly contributing to the strategy) will meet twice-yearly to review progress and set new milestones for the next period. A separate officials group will meet quarterly to ensure momentum is sustained; and one meeting per year will be an 'open' meeting at which care leaver representatives from the advisory group mentioned above and voluntary sector organisations will be able to ask questions about progress and next steps.



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## Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on 18 January 2017

Electoral Divisions affected: All
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## Children's Services Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2016/17

(Appendix A refers)

Contact for further information:

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### Executive Summary

The Plan at Appendix A is the work plan for the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee, including current sub-group reviews.

### Recommendation

The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee is asked to note and comment on the report.

### Background and Advice

In line with all the scrutiny committees, a statement of the current status of work being undertaken and considered by the Committee is presented to each meeting for information.

### Consultations

N/A.

### Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### Risk management

This report has no significant risk implications.

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**  
**List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
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N/A.

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A.



Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – Work plan 2016/17

Updated 18.1.17

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Purpose/Key issues</b>
9 March 2016	Children's Partnership Board representatives	Debra Wilson Terri Hacking Sarah Barraclough Elaine Shinks Alice Marquis-Carr	Each CPB representative to provide the Committee with a brief verbal overview of their role.
	Draft work plan	Wendy Broadley	Following on from the briefing session held for members on 9 Feb a draft work plan has been formulated for discussion by the Committee.
20 April 2016	Newton Consultants	Steven Knight Emily Roach	A presentation to the full Committee on the outcome of the work the consultants have done on the Children's Pathway Review including a synopsis of their findings.
	Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)	Brendan Lee	To provide the Committee with background on the service and identify areas for scrutiny by a sub-group in advance of an inspection of the service
	Youth Offending Team (YOT)	Barbara Bath	To provide the Committee with background on the service and identify areas for scrutiny by a sub-group in advance of an inspection of the service
	Update from the Chair	CC Gina Dowding	The Chair to update the Committee on recent activity
	Work plan	Wendy Broadley	The Committee to agree the work plan going forward and to consider what methods of scrutiny they intend to use.

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Purpose/Key issues</b>
8 June 2016	Not a formal meeting of the Committee. To be used for sub group work		
20 July 2016	Not a formal meeting of the Committee. To be used for sub group work		
7 September 2016	Annual report of the Lancashire Children's Safeguarding Board	Jane Booth	Opportunity for the Committee to receive the annual report of the LCSB and for areas to be identified where scrutiny can add value
	Fostering & Adoption Services	Barbara Bath	A background summary of the service with areas identified that would benefit from additional scrutiny.
	SEND sub group	CC Susie Charles	A verbal update on the progress of the sub group review
	YOT sub group	CC Gina Dowding	The recommendations of the YOT sub group be presented to the Committee for approval
19 October 2016	Not a formal meeting of the Committee. To be used for sub group work		
30 November 2016	Not a formal meeting of the Committee. To be used for sub group work		
18 January 2017	Care Leavers	Tony Morrisey	A background summary of the current procedures with areas identified that would benefit from additional scrutiny
	Improvement Board update	Louise Taylor and/or Linda Clegg plus Richard Cooke	To provide the Committee with a status report following the quarterly visit from Ofsted – potential areas where CSSC can add value to be identified

Date of Meeting	Topic	Author	Purpose/Key issues
	SEND sub group	Brendan Lee	Further update of the SEND sub group review
	Fostering & Adoption sub group report	CC Gina Dowding	Final report of the sub group review in relation to the Fostering & Adoption Services
1 March 2017	Children's Health KPIs	Sakthi Karunanithi	<p>Details of what services are commissioned then with a particular focus on childhood obesity, alcohol and drugs to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Has there been any recent changes to the strategy, if so what,</li> <li>○ What are the efficiency savings made</li> <li>○ How do we demonstrate success?</li> </ul> <p>Also an update on how the digital strategy will promote positive health messages to young people</p>
12 April 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of the work of the Committee over the last 12 months</li> <li>• Any topics identified through the CfPS children's scrutiny training event that will have taken place on 6 Feb</li> </ul>	<p>Wendy Broadley</p> <p>tbc</p>	What's been successful and what hasn't

**Committee Sub Group Summary**

Name of Sub Group review	Completion Date and/or Committee Date reporting to
YOT	September
SEND	September (interim) and January (further update)
Fostering promotion	January

**Potential Future Agenda items** (suggested by):

- Children's Centres and the new draft plan for the transformation of services (CC Dowding)
- School Nurses (member briefing session)
- Childhood Obesity (member briefing session)
- Children's social care – role of the Corporate Parenting Board

DRAFT