

APPENDIX 1

North Lanarkshire Corporate Parenting Strategy and Improvement Plan

2019-2022 : *Shared Parenting – Families and Professionals Together*

Getting it right for every child in North Lanarkshire (Logo)

Our Children, Our Pledge

We pledge the following to all children and young people who are or who have been looked after in North Lanarkshire

- Listen – we pledge to listen to children, young people and their families and to take their views and experiences seriously
- Home - we pledge to help children and young people stay with their own families if possible but if this is not possible, to provide good quality, stable placements where children and young people feel safe, valued and cared for by excellent carers and where they can be supported into young adulthood
- Education and work — we pledge to ensure that children and young people are given as much support as they need to do well at school and to move into the world of work or further education successfully
- Health —we pledge to improve the health outcomes of children and young people by providing them with accessible, timely and effective health interventions and wider support for their wellbeing
- Leisure — we pledge to support and encourage children and young people to enjoy as wide a range as possible of leisure, cultural, social and sport activities to enable them to reach their full potential

Introduction

Welcome to the North Lanarkshire Corporate Parenting Strategy which outlines our vision and commitment to improving the lives of our looked after children and young people, including care leavers. This strategy builds on the progress of the 2015-2018 strategy. It has been co-produced by the North Lanarkshire Looked after Children and Young People's Group (NLCYPG) and the Today not Tomorrow (TNT) Group. The NLCYPG leads on corporate parenting and is a task group within the North Lanarkshire children's services planning structure. TNT is the young people's group which supports our Champion's Board. The improvement plan which supports the strategy identifies key priorities and actions and how we intend to deliver these.

We want the best for all of our children and young people and as the corporate parents for looked after children and young people and care leavers, we want them to thrive and reach their potential in all areas of their lives. As corporate parents we must approach this parenting role with as much passion and commitment as any family would and ensure that our looked after children and young people have every opportunity to reach their full potential.

All organisations and services within North Lanarkshire with corporate parenting responsibilities are essential contributors to ensuring that this strategy is successful and that the outcomes for children who are, or who have been, looked after are as good as those for all children. In support of this, members of the North Lanarkshire Children's Services Partnership Board, the strategic planning group for children's services, previously signed the pledge detailed on page 1, and will recommit to this in June 2019 to mark the launch of our updated strategy and improvement plan. This pledge outlines our commitments in the key areas of home, education and work, health, leisure and most significantly listening.

The views and experiences of our care experienced children and young people will be central to our approach to improving outcomes in line with our broader partnership agreement with children and young people in North Lanarkshire: # NLCAskme.

North Lanarkshire is also a signatory to the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant which provides a benchmark to us as corporate parents, carers, practitioners, managers and decision makers in fulfilling our duties to improve the life chances of all of our care leavers. **(add hyper link)**

Delivering positive outcomes for our looked after children and young people and our care leavers is a key priority for the Council and its partners. We must now make sure that this is put into practice and that our commitment to this group of children and young people is delivered through the implementation of this strategy and progressed through our improvement plan

Bigger 'Picture'

This strategy takes account of the priorities identified for children, young people and their families in wider planning and improvement programmes which include:

- The **Plan for North Lanarkshire** which sets the vision for North Lanarkshire and is the vehicle for delivering shared priorities and improving outcomes, supporting shared accountability and the delivery of agreed priorities across all partner agencies. This aims to ensure employees and stakeholders work towards a shared ambition and that challenges are addressed through integrated solutions. Contained within the Plan is the key priority to 'support all children and young people to realise their full potential.'
- In support of ambitions contained in The Plan for North Lanarkshire, **The North Lanarkshire Children's Services Plan 2017-2020**, is the local partnership driver for children's services improvement across North Lanarkshire. This includes improving outcomes for looked after children and young people as one of its four key priorities.
- **The Care Leavers Covenant** to which North Lanarkshire is a signatory builds on the principles of Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) by taking a holistic, young person-centred approach. It focuses on the long-term wellbeing needs of care leavers; highlighting the need for early intervention and support that is appropriate, proportionate and timely.
- The national Independent **Care Review** currently in its Journey phase which aims to deliver lasting and transformational change in the care systems and outcomes for children and young people. Emerging messages and findings including those from the Stop Go work stream have, and will continue to, inform this strategy and improvement plan

This strategy also takes account of a range of improvement programmes being taken forward by the Children's Services Partnership including:

- Realigning Children's Services
- Scottish Attainment Challenge
- Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative
- National Third Sector GIRFEC Project
- Permanence and Care Excellence (PaCE)
- Transforming Pathways
- Better Hearings

Other 'national drivers' including legislation, key policies and programmes which have informed our work with children, young people and their families and the development of this strategy include;

- 'Looked After Children: We Can and Must Do Better' (2007; 2013)
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- Carers (Scotland) Act 2015
- Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017
- Scottish Mental Health Strategy 2017-2017
- Children and Young People's Mental Health Taskforce Delivery Plan 2018

What does corporate parenting mean?

The Children (Scotland) Act, 1995 sets out specific duties for corporate parents to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their care.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 expanded on this, defining agencies with corporate parenting duties and describing corporate parenting as:

formal and local partnerships between all services responsible for working together to meet the needs of looked after children, young people and care leavers

This means that agencies and services working across North Lanarkshire, including the local authority, NHS Lanarkshire, Police Scotland (Lanarkshire Division), the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) and third sector ('voluntary' and 'charitable' organisations) need to work together and alongside families to make sure our looked after children and young people's experiences are positive and their life chances are improved.

Every corporate parent is expected to fulfil the duties contained in the 2014 Act. These duties include:

- Being alert to matters which adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children, young people and care leavers;
- Assessing the needs of those children and young people for the services and support they provide;
- Promoting the interests of those children and young people;
- Seeking to provide opportunities which will promote the wellbeing of looked after children, young people and care leavers;
- Taking action to help children and young people access such opportunities and make use of the services and support provided

Engagement with children and young people

Some care experienced young people have co-produced this strategy and improvement plan. We have a partnership agreement for working with all children and young people. The agreement which was produced in partnership with North Lanarkshire's children and young people identifies our values of trust, honesty and respect. We have agreed to:

- Show commitment
- Set realistic goals
- Communicate clearly
- Hold ourselves accountable
- Work as a team (for the purpose of this strategy and plan this is with our looked after children and care experienced young people)
- Agree a shared vision
- Be understanding
- Be prepared to compromise
- Evaluate our work
- Make an effort

The agreement underpins this strategy and our work to progress the improvement plan.

Who are our looked after children

Looked after children are children may be 'looked after at home' - living with their parent(s) or 'looked after away from home' - living with foster carers, in residential children's houses or with people who are part of their wider family network/ kinship carers. Collectively these groups along with care leavers are often referred to as care experienced children and young people (CECYP)

The following tables provide an overview of children and young people who are looked after or in continuing or supported care in North Lanarkshire by placement type and age:

Looked after children and young people (as of 01.04.19)

Placement type	Total	% (OF TOTAL)
Home Supervision	287	36%
Foster Care (including those on permanence orders)	196	25%
Kinship Care	282	36%
Residential Care (children's house/residential schools)	24	3%
Secure Accommodation	3	< 1%
Child Protection Order	1	< 1%
TOTAL	793	100%

- 506 (i.e. 64%) of all looked after children, as of the 1st of April 2009, reside in placements out-with the family home, either in foster care, residential care or kinship care.

Total of looked after children and young people by age and gender (as of 01.04.19)

Age	Total	Male	Female	X
0 to 4	171	91	80	
5 to 10	243	137	105	1
11 to 15	315	180	135	
16 to 17	64	33	31	
TOTAL	793	441	351	1

Total number of care leavers (18 to 21yrs) in continuing care or supported care (as of 01.04.19)

Placement type	Total	Male	Female
Supported care	18	6	12
Independent foster placement	2	2	
NLC foster placement	14	8	6
Kinship Care	32	20	12
Residential	2	2	
Total	68	38	30

There has been a significant increase of around 100 in the number of looked after children and young people in North Lanarkshire in the three years since our previous strategy was launched, primarily reflected in a growth in children and young people supported in kinship placements.

In line with the aspirations underlying the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and our own commitments there has also been over this period a significant growth in the number of care leavers in continuing and supported care placements suggesting those young people are benefiting from a higher level of continuing support and relationships and more gradual transitions to independence.

Our Vision

Our children and young people will be safe, healthy, nurtured, responsible, respected, achieving and included so that they can realise their potential and grow to be successful, learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

As corporate parents* we have a central part to play in making sure we achieve the vision for our looked after children and young people and care leavers. We are also committed to tackling the stigma some children and young people experience as a result of their care status.

*Some of our young people have told us they find the language of 'corporate parenting' is bureaucratic and whilst this language remains in our strategy and plan as is now widely understood and reflects our legislative responsibilities, we have adopted the subtitle for our strategy of '*Shared Parenting – Families and Professionals Together*'. A suggestion which came from our young people and which reflects the spirit of collaboration we hope will be embedded in our approach to delivering a better future for our care experienced children and young people.

Our Values

- Children, young people and their families are stakeholders and partners in the planning and delivery of children's services
- All children and young people are included, irrespective of health, gender, ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, economic circumstances, religion or belief
- We promote and safeguard the rights of children and young people and make sure everybody is aware of these rights and understand what they are, as expressed in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Children

Our Priorities for Looked After Children and Young People and Care Leavers our Improvement Plan

Our improvement plan focusses on key areas which have been identified by children and young people as being important to them:

- Listening,
- Home,
- Education and Work,
- Health
- Leisure

Embedded within these is also a commitment to supporting looked after children, young people and care leavers develop and maintain meaningful relationships with those who are important to them.

Under Section 59 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, corporate parents must prepare, publish and review a Corporate Parenting Plan, we are calling this our improvement plan because the focus is on improving the lives of our looked after children and young people and care leavers.

We have set out our priorities for the period 1st of April 2019 - 31st March 2022 and identified the actions we will undertake to achieve these and the measures we will use to make sure they have made a difference to children and young people's lives. The plan will be reviewed on a six monthly basis and updated annually. The responsibility for making sure that there is progress lies with the Children's Services Partnership Board and it's 'working arm' the Improving Children's Services Group (ICSG) who will receive six monthly reports. The Today not Tomorrow (TNT) Group will also receive six monthly progress reports.

Action: Listening: We will listen to your views about what is important to you and make sure you are involved in decisions that affect your life

What actions will we take	Who is the lead	Our task	Our timescale	How will we know this has made a difference
To support Today Not Tomorrow (TNT) to further develop both the TNT group and the Champions' Board	TNT, Who Cares Manager Service Manager/Senior Officer corporate parenting (Social Work)	Produce and implement development plan for TNT	April 2019	Plan is progressed, membership extended
	Chair LACYPG and TNT with support from Who Cares	Champions' Board review and relaunch	June 2019	Champions' Board established and clarity of responsibilities for all members
Engage on a regular basis with corporate parents at both strategic and operational level to make sure they are aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities including the delivery of this improvement plan	LACYPG and TNT	Timetable for briefings and engagement opportunities	May 2019	Briefings delivered/social media utilized. Surveys confirm all corporate parents are aware of their responsibilities and that they have progressed actions to deliver this improvement plan

Further promote a positive profile and the individual aspirations of Care Experienced children and Young People (CECYP). This will include providing them with a range of choices when they leave care — where they live, how they secure work experience/employment or further education. Work with TNT to address the stigma which many children and young people experience at times as associated with their care status.	LACYPG and TNT	Plan agreed	September 2019	CECYP have a more positive profile
		Plan implemented and reviewed	October 2019-September 2020	
Strengthen how we engage with looked after children and young people throughout their care journey. This will include a review of our Pathway Planning for our children/young people who are 14+	SW lead on behalf of multi-agency partnership Focus groups: children and YP supported by agencies and TNT	Review of pathway planning	March 2020	It is clear that children and YP are involved in their plans and that their views have been taken into account when decisions are being made that affect them
Review the mechanisms and tools used to support children's views to be heard and recorded	SW Lead in collaboration with focus groups of C&YP	Review including discussions with C&YP	August 2019	A range of mechanisms are in place for ease of use by C&YP to record their views/opinions about plans and decisions which affect them
		Proposal agreed	October 2019	
		Updated tools and mechanisms in place	August 2020	

<p>We will review our practice in relation to meetings about children and young people to identify what is working and what needs to change –</p> <p>By listening to children and young people about how we can improve, we will make sure meetings centre on the child/young person, that the language used is clear and jargon free, that we explain clearly why the meeting is taking place, what decisions are being made and why and that timescales are achieved.</p>	<p>LACYPG/All Corporate Parents with support from Who Cares</p>	<p>Review our meeting processes, identify best practice and agree flexible options to meet the needs of individual children and their families.</p> <p>Make sure we use plain English in our reports, jargon free and that decisions are clearly explained to children and their families</p>	<p>January 2020</p>	<p>All meetings involving children and YP has been reviewed. We have identified areas for improvement and with children and YP co-produced an improvement plan with agreement for implementation to improve children's experience</p>
<p>Share relevant actions from the Local 'Better Hearings' Improvement Plan and ask children for their views on what actions are making it better for them and what other developments are needed</p>	<p>SCRA and Multi-agency 'Better Hearings' Steering Group</p>	<p>Implement recommendations from 'Better Hearings' Improvement Plan for engagement with children and young people and families</p>	<p>April 2019 onwards</p>	<p>Children and Young People's experience of being involved in children's hearings has been improved</p>

Action: Home: Your corporate parents will work together to make sure that we find the best place for you to live, giving you what you need to be safe and cared for and whenever possible keeping you in your community and in touch with people who are important to you

What actions will we take	Who is the lead	Our task	Our timescale	How will we know this has made a difference
<p>Support parents to care for their children and work in partnership with them to help improve outcomes for the family</p> <p>We will link this with the review our parenting strategy and approaches to make sure these are evidence based and reconfiguration of family support including through our Transforming Pathways Programme</p>	<p>Prevent Task Group/Parenting Programme Working Group /Transforming Pathways Group</p>	<p>Parenting programmes review complete</p>	<p>Review complete August 2018</p>	<p>Parents have inputted to our evaluation of our programmes/approaches. We have worked in partnership with parents to identify improved outcomes which are achievable and realistic and there is evidence that these have been achieved and have made a difference to the lives of families.</p>
		<p>Refresh our Parenting Strategy</p>	<p>March 2020 Strategy Complete</p>	
		<p>Implement Parenting Strategy and pilot new models of family support</p>	<p>April 2020 onwards</p>	
<p>Consider how we use the approach of Self Directed Support (SDS) to provide more tailored supports and improve the lives of a wider group of children including those looked after at home and agree changes to practice to implement</p>	<p>Social Work in collaboration with children, young people and families and other corporate parents including Education</p>	<p>Agree and implement practice changes to SDS</p>	<p>March 2021</p>	<p>SDS is implemented as an approach with a wider group of children and families and there is evidence that this has supported improved outcomes.</p>

<p>We will do all we can to keep children and their siblings living together and if this is not possible ensure that we have a plan for regular contact which can be direct or indirect, in line with the needs of all the children/young people involved</p>	<p>LACYPG in collaboration with children/young people supported by Who Cares</p>	<p>Undertake a scoping exercise to establish a clear picture of how well we do this at present.</p> <p>Raise awareness amongst staff and implement mechanisms to monitor the quality of plans in relation to sibling placement/contact.</p> <p>Individual plans for children will take account of sibling relationships and contact arrangements when children are separated.</p>	<p>July 2019</p> <p>September 2019</p>	<p>Children and young people remain with or in contact with their siblings when a child/sibling group is being looked after away from home.</p>
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For children looked after away from home, we will do what we can to minimise disruption in placements, so reducing the number of care placements they experience. Using the information from the current review of disrupted placements, we will look at what supports are provided to carers including those from the third sector and review what works and what we need to do better	SW Children's Carers' Team in collaboration with Education and Families Sub Group, to lead a multi-agency approach and report to LACYPG.	Report (Placement Disruption)	August 2019	There is a reduction in the number of disrupted placements. If/when a disruption happens we have strengthened how we take forward improvements and there is evidence that this is informing our practice.
		Agree and take forward actions with ongoing evaluation	December 2019-June 2021	
		Evaluation report and agreed next steps	September 2021 (Report)	
Care Leavers will have appropriate choices for where they want to live and in accommodation that best meets their needs	NLC Housing in their role as Corporate Parents	Develop a package of accommodation choices	April 2019-March 2022	Care Leavers are living in accommodation that best meets their needs.
We will support children and young people are supported to make and keep relationships that are important and not harmful to them	All Corporate Parents	Work with all agencies to raise awareness and improve support in this area	April 2019-March 2022	Children and young people's plans evidence we are supporting them to maintain relationships.

Action: Education and Work: We will support you to make the most of learning opportunities in education, school, college, university. We will help you to find work experience and employment opportunities and make sure you are supported into adulthood, supporting you to meet your goals and achieve your aspirations

What actions will we take	Who is the lead	Our task	Our timescale	How will we know this has made a
<p>We will ensure children and young people who need additional support receive this, including bespoke packages which help them achieve their potential.</p>	<p>Virtual School Leader/ Manager children and Families Education and Families Attainment Sub-group and ASN Sub-group</p>	<p>Virtual School Leader in post</p>	<p>May 2019</p>	<p>Attainment outcomes are improved and children benefit from the additional resources and supports available to meet their needs.</p>
		<p>Phase 1 ASN Review completed</p>	<p>September 2019 201920192019</p>	
		<p>Virtual School Model established to include Wrap Around Approach /Bespoke Packages/Whole System Approach Proposal</p>	<p>September 2019</p>	
<p>We will ensure looked after children have an educational placement to meet their needs and that supports are available to maintain the placement.</p>	<p>Education and Families Virtual School Lead and Support Team</p>	<p>Review of existing supports and proposal for way forward agreed -</p>	<p>September 2019</p>	<p>Looked after children have an educational placement and support package to meet their needs. Exclusions of looked after children and young people are significantly reduced and they and their families/carers are more engaged with education.</p>
		<p>Actions from the proposal taken forward and ongoing evaluation</p>	<p>October 2019 — December 2021</p>	
		<p>Evaluation and Report</p>	<p>January 2022- March 2022</p>	

Care experienced young people will have information about the choices available at the time of transitions including from school into work and be offered support to take up and sustain opportunities for employment and training.	Skills Development Scotland, New College Lanarkshire, Family Firm Sub-Group	Review and Update information annually	August 2019- March 2022	Care experienced young people will have improved information about what is available to them at times of transitions. Increase in sustained positive destinations.
	Family Firm Steering Group	Further development of NLC Family Firm 'approach' — transition into work	April -2019- March 2022	

Action: Wellbeing, Health and Leisure: We will look after your wellbeing to make sure that you are healthy and active, we will do this in partnership with you

What actions will we take	Who is the lead	Our task	Our timescale	How will we know this has made a difference
We will make sure that the health needs of children and young people are assessed and actioned, when they first become looked after and for as long as they are looked after.	NHSL/HSCP and NLC Education and Families	Continue to complete timely and high quality health needs assessments, make sure health needs are met	Throughout the timescale of this plan -2019-2022	Children and young people have improved outcomes by having their health needs met
<p>We will make sure that within 4 weeks of becoming looked after children have a full health needs assessment including their emotional wellbeing and that interventions are actioned</p> <p>We will continue to monitor and review the process for health needs assessment and make sure the quality of assessments are of a high standard and that interventions taken forward without delay</p>	NHSL and NLC Education and Families	<p>Health needs assessments are completed within 4 weeks of children and young people becoming looked after and action taken to meet identified health needs</p> <p>Children's and young people's health needs will be reviewed within the LAA reviewing framework</p>	2019 — 2022	Outcomes are improved for children and young people whose health needs have been identified within the 4 week timescale and interventions progressed
Listening to care experienced young people, we have identified that we need to improve how we support their mental health, we must agree a strategy and improvement plan in this area of work	ICSG Mental Health Wellbeing and Resilience Task Group in collaboration with Education & Families National Improvement Framework (NIF) Task Group	Strategy and Improvement Plan	December 2019	Strategy agreed and Improvement Plan implemented. Evidence of improvement in outcomes for children and young people who need support for their mental health
		Evaluation/Impact Evaluation	January 2020 — March 2021—	

We will make sure that children and young people and parents can access affordable leisure activities and provided necessary supports to do this, review our current mechanisms and availability of	LACYPG in collaboration with NL Leisure and relevant third sector partners	Review in consultation with children and young people	April 2019 — June 2019 —	Children, young people and parents have improved wellbeing through participation in leisure activities including sport, art and drama
		Agreed actions are taken forward, ongoing evaluation of impact	June 2019- December 2020	
We will make sure that there is a range of opportunities available to encourage children and young people to be active	LACYPG in collaboration with NL Leisure and relevant third sector partners	Review in consultation with children and young people what is currently available and identify gaps	April 2019— June 2019 —	There is a range of opportunities available to children and young people and evidence that they are improving outcomes for them
		Take forward actions	June 2019 onwards	