



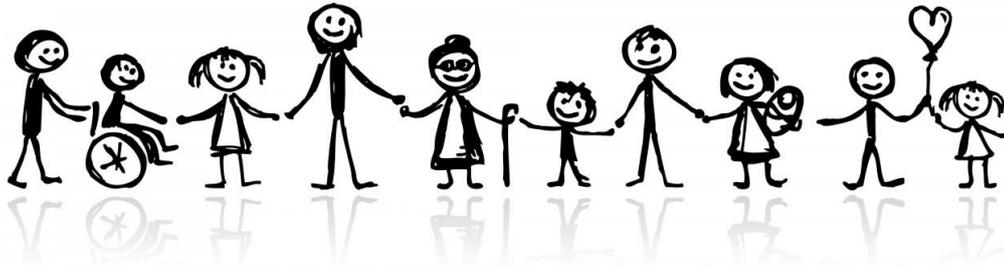
**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Wokingham Borough Council

Children's Services

Corporate Parenting Strategy

2021-2023



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Foreword from Carol Cammiss, Director of Children's Services



Our Children in Care and Care Leavers are amongst the most vulnerable children and young people we have the privilege of protecting and supporting in Wokingham. When a child comes into our care as a council we have an incredibly important job to do. We become their Corporate Parent, a role which carries with it all the responsibility that comes with being a mother or father. We are their advocate, champion, protector, and guide through difficult times, providing safety, love, stability, hope and dignity, and the ambition to support our children and young people to achieve and transition with confidence to adulthood.

Our strategy lays out our commitment to providing support for Children in Care and Care Leavers which would be good enough for our own children, and explains what we will focus on so that we can work with our children and young people to achieve the best possible outcomes for them.

I hope you find it an interesting and insightful read.

Carol Cammiss
Director of Children's Services

Foreword from the Children in Care Council

As the Children in Care Council, we are proud to represent all Children in Care in the Borough. We meet regularly to champion the needs and views of children in care, and be their voice through difficult and challenging times.

We have welcomed the opportunity to be involved in developing and reviewing this important strategy setting out the role of Corporate Parents.

There are many reasons why children and young people come into care, and the length of time we are in care can vary widely. We are pleased that this strategy recognises our individuality.

This strategy reassures us that you, our Corporate Parents, are there for us and want for us what you would want for your own children. It also tells us that you have the same aspirations for us as you have for every other child in the Borough.

We hope that in the coming weeks and months this strategy leads to some really positive change for children in care and care leavers, and we are looking forward to hearing about the actions which are being put into place to support us and the children and young people we represent.

The Purpose of this Strategy

This strategy outlines where we will focus our efforts over the next two years to ensure embedding a sense of vision and responsibility towards the children in care and care leavers is a priority for everyone. It recognises that as corporate parents we need to be satisfied that the support we provide and our ambition for children and young people in care and care leavers, would be good enough for our own children. In addition it is about acknowledging that some children and young people in care and care leavers may need additional support to enable them to meet their full potential; whilst recognising that each child and young person in our care, or leaving our care, is an individual, with their own very distinct identity, personality, experiences and needs.

This is a strategy informed and ratified by our children and young people for whom we are corporate parents, who understand what it means to be a child in care or a care leaver, and the particular challenges they face. This strategy acknowledges that we are Corporate Parents to all children and young people cared for by Wokingham Borough Council, whether they are living in the Borough or outside of the Borough.

What is Corporate Parenting

The role that councils play in looking after children is one of the most important things we do. Local authorities have a unique responsibility to the children in our care and care leavers. In this context local authorities are often referred to as being the 'corporate parent' of these children and young people, and the critical question that local authorities should ask in adopting such an approach is: 'would this be good enough for my child?'

Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members, understand the responsibility of what it means to be a Corporate Parent, for Children, as do those working directly in children's services. However, it is also vital that all parts of a local authority beyond those directly responsible for care and pathway planning, recognise they too have a key role in supporting Children in Care and Care Leavers.

A strong ethos of corporate parenting means that sense of vision and responsibility towards the children in care and care leavers is a priority for everyone. We recognise that children in care have the same needs – to be loved, cared for and feel safe - as other children. But also that there are unique challenges that children in care and care leavers face. A strong corporate parent recognises that the care system is not just about keeping children safe, but also about promoting recovery, resilience and well-being.

All children need love and stability in order to thrive. A strong corporate parenting ethos means that everyone from the Chief Executive down to front line staff, as well as elected council members, are concerned about those children and care leavers as if they were their own. This is evidenced by an embedded culture where council officers do all that is reasonably possible to ensure the council is the best 'parent' it can be to the child or young person and to consider whether the care given would be good enough for our children.

The 7 Principles of Corporate Parenting

In order to thrive, children and young people have certain key needs that good parents generally meet. The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local

authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
2. To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
3. To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
4. To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
6. For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
7. To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

The corporate parenting principles describe the behaviours and attitudes expected of councils when they are acting as any good parent would do by supporting, encouraging and guiding their children to lead healthy, rounded and fulfilled lives. The principles intend to ensure that all councils have high ambitions for the children in their care. In doing so, the application of the principles must respond to the individual needs, vulnerabilities or disadvantages of children in care and care leavers. This will assist in securing that such children and young people are not placed at significant disadvantage when compared with the support a non-looked after child or young person may receive from their family.

How the principles work

The detail of what local authorities must do to effectively care for children in care and care leavers is addressed through existing legislation, regulations and accompanying statutory guidance. The corporate parenting principles are intended to inform how a local authority carries out those existing responsibilities, whether that is about assessing a child in care's needs or listening to and taking account of the wishes and feelings of care leavers. The principles are intended to encourage local authorities to be ambitious and aspirational for their children in care and care leavers.

The corporate parenting principles do not replace or change existing legal duties, for example in relation to the provision of accommodation for care leavers aged 18 and above.

The Wokingham Corporate Parenting Board

The role of the Wokingham Corporate Parenting Board is to ensure that all elements of the Council work collectively together to make sure the children in Wokingham's care get the best possible support and service that can be offered. Corporate Parenting requires ownership and leadership at a senior level, including from elected members in the Council.

The current key objectives of the Corporate Parenting Board are:

- Develop a Corporate Parenting Strategy for adoption by the Council. Monitor the implementation of the Strategy, including a formal annual report to the Council. Hold an

annual conference to celebrate looked after children's successes and stimulate further improvements to the service.

- Provide an access point for children and carers.
- Provide advocacy for looked after children in the delivery and development of services.
- Promote Corporate Parenting within the organisation
- Provide a single point of reference for issues on Corporate Parenting, together with information and training.

The proposed new key objectives of the Corporate Parenting Board are:

- to routinely examine and challenge performance relating to children in care and inquire into those areas where performance is poor or of concern
- to explore the extent to which the Council is contributing to meeting the needs of children in care and care leavers
- ensure that the strategic plans for children in care and care leavers are being effectively delivered
- identify and celebrate the achievements of individual children in care and care leavers
- meet and listen to children and care leavers in their context or environment. Respond to what they or their representatives (on the board) say about their experiences of being in care and the kinds of services they want
- be a champion for children in care and care leavers in the Council using the standard: "is this good enough for my child?" to challenge and champion services provided by the Council and partners
- ensure national initiatives in relation to children in care and care leavers are disseminated and embedded in practice
- ensure those planning, delivering, and monitoring services have taken account of diversity and equality issues affecting children in care and care leavers
- monitor the implementation of agreed actions, in particular actions taken in response to the views of children and young people

The Corporate Parenting Board will ensure the objectives are met by:

- listening to the feedback from children and young people and making proposals for action within the Council to improve services to children in care and care leavers

- monitoring progress and development of children and young people in key areas such as education, health, accommodation, and employment opportunities by using regular management information
- making recommendations to the Council on ways of improving development opportunities for children and young people, and the quality of care offered to children in care and care leavers in Wokingham
- having the opportunity to obtain direct feedback and experiences of those in receipt of or who deliver our services. To create the opportunity for the Board to have a fuller understanding of the services we deliver and lived experience of children and young people, through both direct engagement and also scrutiny and overview of the reports presented

To do this the Corporate Parenting Board will receive:

- statistical data set which shows, numbers, progress and outcomes for children in care and care leavers
- the views of children and young people
- the views and impact of key stakeholders
- opportunities to observe and engage with Children in care and care leavers

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board can also use their position to raise awareness of the role amongst colleagues, and provide support to the lead member for children's services. The Corporate Parenting Board does not replace the duty of all Councillors; members of all committees have a responsibility to consider how reports before them impact upon children in care and care leavers. The Corporate Parenting Board members receive regular progress reports with regard to children in care and care leavers and review data to ensure they have an overview of medium-to-long-term trends. Corporate Parenting Board members ensure all Agencies Priorities support the needs of children in care and care leavers, by providing challenge and scrutiny.

The role of councillors and council staff

The corporate parenting principles are about embedding a positive culture in the local authority towards children in care and care leavers. From the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council through to all WBC staff. The Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services are appointed for the purposes of discharging the education and children's social services functions of the local authority. The role of directors, councillors, heads of service and front line managers is to champion and promote children in care and care leavers, to ensure their needs and wishes are always taken into account.

Councillors as Corporate Parents

Senior leaders and councillors will champion corporate parenting in the following ways:

- Lead member for Children’s Services is Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board
- Nominated councillors take a full and active role as members of the Corporate Parenting Board
- Lead members and senior officers promote the idea that children in care and care leavers are part of the local authority ‘family’
- Ensure that Corporate Priorities support the needs of children in care and care leavers, by providing challenge and scrutiny
- Members of Children in Care Councils (CiCCs) have regular and positive contact with senior managers and the Lead Member for Children, who know them well
- CiCC members are part of the selection process for senior staff in the local authority and in the design of an annual questionnaire about services for children in care and care leavers
- Senior officers and councillors demonstrate that they care about what happens to their children in care and care leavers by taking their corporate parenting role seriously
- Services and practice change as a result of the views of care leavers

Council Staff as Corporate Parents

The role of the Corporate Parent is one that applies to all relevant people within a local authority, not just councillors. This ethos, to strive for the best for our children in care, as if they were your own, should be adopted by all council staff not just those who work with children in care. The service areas where consideration of the corporate parenting principles are of most relevance are: education, social care, housing, libraries, sports and leisure, strategic policies (such as health and well-being plans) and local council tax collection.

Our Partners as Corporate Parents

The corporate parenting principles apply only to local authorities, however Directors of Children’s Services and Lead Members for Children should nevertheless ensure that relevant partners understand how they can assist local authorities in applying the principles in relation to the services those partners may provide. ‘Relevant partners’ include local policing bodies and Chief Officers of Police, local probation boards and probation services, clinical commissioning groups, NHS England, schools and educational institutions.

Our Commitment, Vision & Services

Children in care and care leavers have significant and complex needs and are among the most vulnerable children and young people in our society. Yet they have the right to expect the outcomes we want for every child:

- be healthy
- be safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution to society
- achieve economic well-being

The outcomes for children in care are, nationally, below those of their peers (in terms of education achievement, employment, mental health involvement, and so on). It is therefore necessary for better monitoring and coordination at a strategic level of the parenting, and other services and support that children in care receive.

The objectives of the Corporate Parenting Board are:

- to explore the extent to which the Council is contributing to meeting the needs of children in care and care leavers
- ensure that the strategic plans for children in care and care leavers are being effectively delivered
- identify and celebrate the achievements of individual children in care and care leavers
- meet and listen to children and care leavers in their context or environment. Respond to what children and children and young people, and their representatives (on the board) say about their experiences of being in care and the kinds of services they want
- be a champion for children in care and care leavers in the Council using the standard: **“is this good enough for my child?”** to challenge and scrutinise services provided by the Council and partners
- ensure national initiatives in relation to children in care and care leavers are disseminated and embedded in local practice.
- ensure those planning, delivering, and monitoring services have taken account of diversity and equality issues affecting children in care and care leavers
- monitor the implementation of agreed actions, in particular actions taken in response to the views of children and young people.
- to routinely examine and challenge performance relating to children in care and inquire into those areas where performance is poor or of concern

This will be done by:

- listening to the feedback from children and young people and making proposals for action within the Council to improve services to children in care and care leavers
- Scrutinising the Children in Care and Care leavers Strategy and the Corporate Parenting Strategy and all associated actions to ensure progress against strategic actions
- monitoring progress and development of children and young people in key areas such as education, health, accommodation, and employment opportunities by using regular management information

- making recommendations to the Council on ways of improving development opportunities for children and young people, and the quality of care offered to children in care and care leavers in Wokingham.

Our Corporate Parenting Principles

The goal of the Wokingham Corporate Parenting Board is to embed a culture where the local authority builds positive relationships and routinely works with a wide range of agencies to ensure that we meet our four agreed Corporate Parenting Priorities:

1. To promote health opportunities for Children in Care alongside the promotion of emotional health and wellbeing development and link to ‘Futures in Mind’.

We must ensure we are acting in the children’s best interests and promoting physical and mental health and well-being. All good parents take account of their children’s best interests and health and well-being. This is integral to a culture and attitude where investing in the quality of relationships with children in care and care leavers is recognised as of crucial importance. Young people will feel listened to, understood and supported to reach their full potential.

Examples of how we will achieve this:

- Specialist health teams secure speedy access for looked-after children to specialist provision such as speech and language therapy.
- Ensuring that transitions into adult health services are clear and efficient and ensuring that health needs are considered consistently in reviews and assessment meetings so that care leavers are aware of and able to access medical clinics, drug and alcohol services and family planning clinics when necessary.
- Ensuring health and well-being encompasses emotional, mental and physical health and well-being.

2. To provide Children in Care with Stability, Permanence and good quality care

In order to thrive, children in care and care leavers need to feel and be safe, to have stability in their lives including in their education and work and to build resilience by forging strong and trusted relationships. For children in care this will mean having regard to the need to maintain, as far as possible, consistency in the home environment, relationships with carers and professionals and school placement. For some care leavers, it may involve supporting a Staying Put arrangement where care leavers and their former foster carers wish to remain living together after the young person reaches the age of 18.

Examples of how we will achieve this:

- children placed out-of-authority receive the support that they need in a timely way.
- Continue to provide council tax exemption to care leavers up to the age of 25
- Local authorities support carers to provide stability for children, for example, authorities may provide foster carers with additional training to effectively respond to children in care’s needs.

(Further details are included within the Wokingham Children’s Placement Strategy 2020-23)

3. For Children in Care to receive the best educational support.

Our looked after children face more challenges than other children, and it is our duty to ensure this does not disadvantage their education. At an individual level it is important to build children's expectations of themselves, setting high aspirations and supporting them to achieve these goals.

Examples of how we will achieve this:

- Wokingham Virtual School (WVS) acts as a Local Authority champion to promote the progress and educational attainment of children and young people who are or who have been in care so that they achieve educational outcomes comparable to their peers. Ensuring that they receive a high quality education is the foundation for improving their lives: <https://www.wokinghamvirtualschool.co.uk/>
- Ensuring Children in Care and Care Leavers with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities have an up to date Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) in place.
- Wokingham Virtual School spend Pupil Premium Plus funding on interventions that will directly benefit the education and the emotional health and well-being of Children in Care and Care Leavers such as 1:1 tuition, school counsellors, equipment, sports clubs and other enriching activities. Consideration is made on a case-by-case basis to ensure the funding is spent on what would be most beneficial to each young person.
- Wokingham Virtual School provides training to school staff to enable them to understand the challenges faced by our Children in Care in education and ensuring they are treated and respected as an individual.
- Providing support and training to foster carers to engage with school staff and 'be there' when children need help with school work.
- Wokingham Borough Council staff and Elected Members should use their networks to provide a wide range of work experience for our children in care.

4. For Care Leavers to have further education, training or employment at 18 and live in safe and stable accommodation.

Local authorities should work alongside universities and other organisations that can offer work experience and apprenticeships to give our children the best options for their future. We must support each child as you would support your own, helping them to figure out what they want to do, helping them achieve and map out the best path for them.

Examples of how we will achieve this:

- Designing an effective local offer for care leavers, in collaboration with care leavers that sets out the range of available services and how to access them.
- Equipping carers and others to support children to make the right post-16 choices to access education, employment and training.
- Care Leavers are also entitled to support and advocacy from the Virtual School up to the age of 25. This support can come in the form of: help with applications, Personal Education Plans in Higher Education if they choose to take it up and advice from a Post-16 specialist

Children in Care Council

The Wokingham Children in Care Council (CICC) is made up of a group of care experienced young people. There are six official members, however all Wokingham Children in Care and Care Leavers are automatically 'members'. The Wokingham CICC is known as Your Second Voice, a name selected by the young people themselves.

The purpose of the CICC is to represent the voice of all Children in Care and Care Leavers in Wokingham in relation to their rights and entitlements. Their aim is to ensure young people in care have a voice around issues that matter to them and ensure all their voices are heard by the people making the decisions. The CICC members meet with senior managers and Corporate Parenting Board members to discuss common issues that they face. The CICC members highlight any identified issues and their aim is to make things better overall for other Wokingham Children in Care and Care Leavers. The CICC has an important role to help improve the lives and opportunities of children in care by making sure those in charge know what it is like to be a child in care.

Activities carried out by the CICC:

- Produce and distribute an Annual survey about the CIC pledge and analyse and share the feedback. The survey is championed by the Assistant Director and Service Manager for Corporate Parenting.
- Consult with young people in care and care leavers via focus group on various issues.
- Produce a Business Plan for the year of things the CICC wants to work on to address the wider issues children in care in Wokingham are facing.
- Input into and provide feedback on any Strategies and Policies relevant to CIC and Care Leavers.
- Wider consultation with CIC & Care Leavers as required.
- Development and maintenance of the CIC Council website:
<https://childrenincarecouncil.wokingham.gov.uk/>

How Will we Know this Strategy has Made a Difference?

The strategy will inform a dynamic action plan, which will lay out what we will do to address each of our Corporate Parenting priorities and be updated as we learn what works and what is less impactful.

We will closely monitor the impact our actions are having using a suite of information including:

- What children and young people tell us about the difference the support we provide has made to them;
- Educational progress and outcomes;
- Other achievements;
- Physical and Emotional Health outcomes;
- Placement quality and Housing suitability;
- Placement stability;
- Achievement of Permanency;
- Stability of Social Worker;
- Quality of and timeliness of plans;
- Whether we are in touch with our care leavers; and
- Young people who are not in education, employment or training

A Note on the Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

2020 and 2021 have been, and continue to be, difficult years due to unprecedented measures to control the spread of the Covid-19 virus. The consequences for young people have yet to be fully understood, but we know that disrupted education and lack of social interaction, alongside the reality of bereavement and the frightening media coverage of the pandemic, are likely to have a long-lasting impact on the wellbeing and achievement of children and young people if not addressed. This does not change our strategic priorities for children and young people in care and care leavers, but we will need to be vigilant and responsive as Corporate Parents to mitigate these negative effects, which may exacerbate the impact of already disrupted, chaotic, and traumatic lives for individual children and young people. The virtual school will continue to provide bespoke educational support for children and young people who are at risk of falling behind, as it has throughout the pandemic, and we will place a renewed focus on supporting the health, in particular emotional and mental health, of children in care and care leavers.

Measures of Success – Outcomes

- The experiences of looked-after children and care leavers, particularly in regards to whether they feel cared for and listened to, are an important measure of how successfully Wokingham Borough Council has embed Corporate Parenting principles.
- Evidence that services and practice have changed as a result of the views of children in care and care leavers
- Children in Care are supported in their emotional health and wellbeing
- Children in Care are provided with good quality care and accommodation
- Children in Care to receive the best educational support
- Care Leavers are in further education, training or employment at 18
- Care Leavers live in safe and stable accommodation

Governance and Accountability

In making arrangements to co-operate, Chief Executives and Directors of Children's Services should ensure that:

- there is a shared understanding across the local authority, relevant partners and the agencies with which it works about the needs of looked-after children and care leavers; and that
- their arrangements and strategies for multi-agency working take account of the needs of looked-after children and care leavers.

It is important to recognise the role of all public sector services in meeting the needs of children and young people in care and care leavers, including partners in the statutory, private and voluntary sectors.

The key partnerships and groups that support children in care and care leavers are:



Appendices

Appendix 1: Demystifying the Language around Children in Care and Care Leavers

Glossary of terms used in Children's Social Care, Wokingham

ARP Access to Resources Panel
C & F Children & Families
CAFCASS Children and Families Court Advisory Support Service
CAMHS Children & Adolescent Mental Health Service
CCG Clinical Commissioning Group
CFA Child and Family Assessment
CIN Children in Need
CIC Children in Care
CICC Children in Care Council
CLA Children Looked After (a term infrequently used for CIC)
CP Child Protection
CPC Child Protection Conference
CPP Children Protection Plan
CP Chair – manages the CP conference
CPB Corporate Parenting Board
CPR Child Permanence Record
CPS Crown Prosecution Service
CS Children's Services
CSE Child Sexual Exploitation
CWD Children with Disabilities
DA Domestic Abuse
DBS Disclosure and Barring Service Check
DfE Department for Education
DHSC Department of Health and Social Care
DV Domestic Violence
EWO Education Welfare Officer
FGC Family Group Conferencing
GAL Guardian Ad Litem - See CAFCASS above
HV Health Visitor
ICPC Initial Child Protection Conference
IFA Independent Fostering Agency
IRO Independent Reviewing Officer
LA Local Authority
LAC Looked after Children (often referred to as CIC)
LADO Local Authority Designated Officer
LSCB Local Safeguarding Children Board
NFA No Further Action
NRPF No Recourse to Public Funds
PP Pathway Plan
PEP Personal Education Plan (**ePEP** is an electronic variant)
PLO Public Law Outline
PPP Powers for Police Protection
PR Parental Responsibility

PRU Pupil Referral Unit
PSW Principal Social Worker
QA Quality Assurance
QAF Quality Assurance Framework
QAST Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Team (in WBC)
RCPC Review Child Protection Conference
SAO Secure Accommodation Order
SCR Serious Case Review
SEND Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SGO Special Guardianship
SoS Signs of Safety
STRAT Strategy discussion
SW Social Worker
TAC Team around the Child
TAF Team around the Family
UASC Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child
VHT Virtual Head Teacher
VS Virtual School
VSH Virtual School Head
YOS Youth Offending Service
YOT Youth Offending Team

Sections of the Children's Act:

S47 – a Child Protection Enquiry – investigation needed as reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

S17 – Child in Need – CSC have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need. This can be used to assist homeless children.

S20 – children are voluntarily accommodated with parent's permission (no court order) LA share PR with parents, but parents have the greater share (51%)

Under **Section 20 Children Act 1989**, where the short breaks (for children with disabilities) exceed a total of 17 days per placement/75 days per 12-month period and/or take place in more than one setting, the child is In Care and an IRO must be appointed and a Care Plan drawn up.

S31 – Full care order – the court creates the order and places the child in local authority care. PR still shared but LA has the greater share (51%)

CO – An order placing a child in the care of the Local Authority

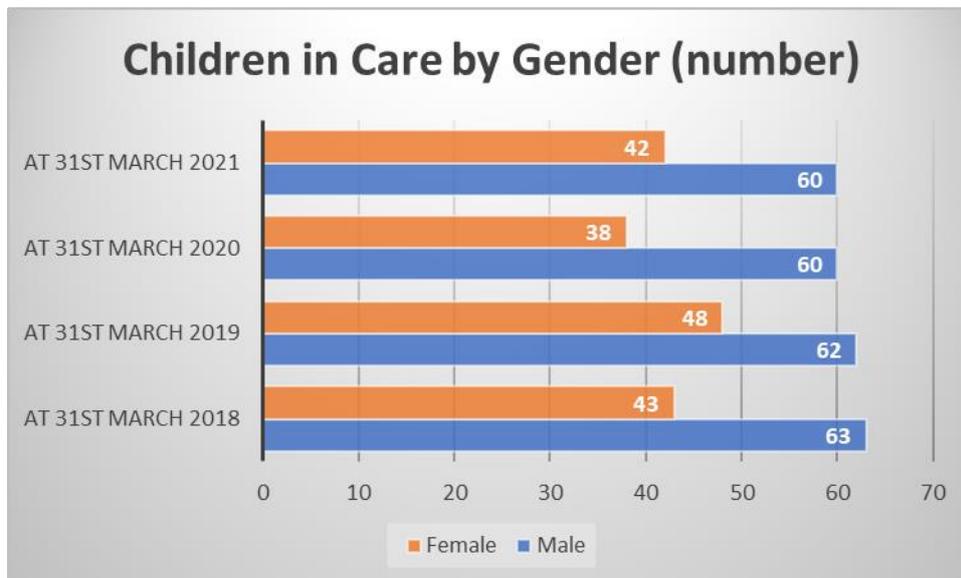
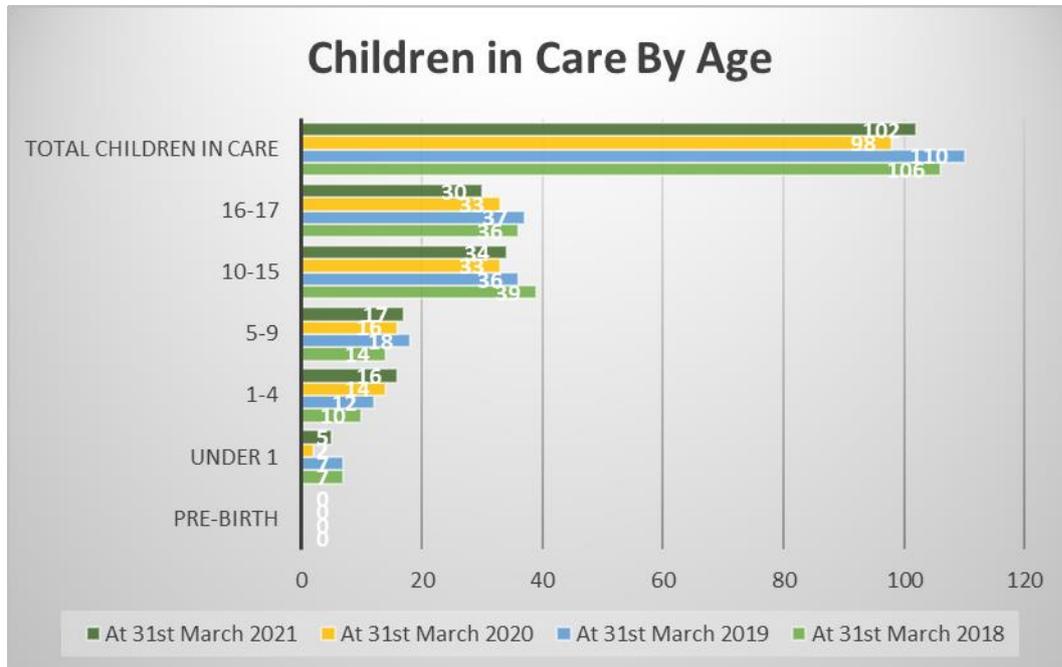
ICO – Interim Care Order – this is used to place children under the care of the LA temporarily while care proceedings are ongoing. The LA has PR for the child

EPO – Emergency Protection Order – an order issued in an emergency situation to protect a child from ongoing or imminent risk of significant harm

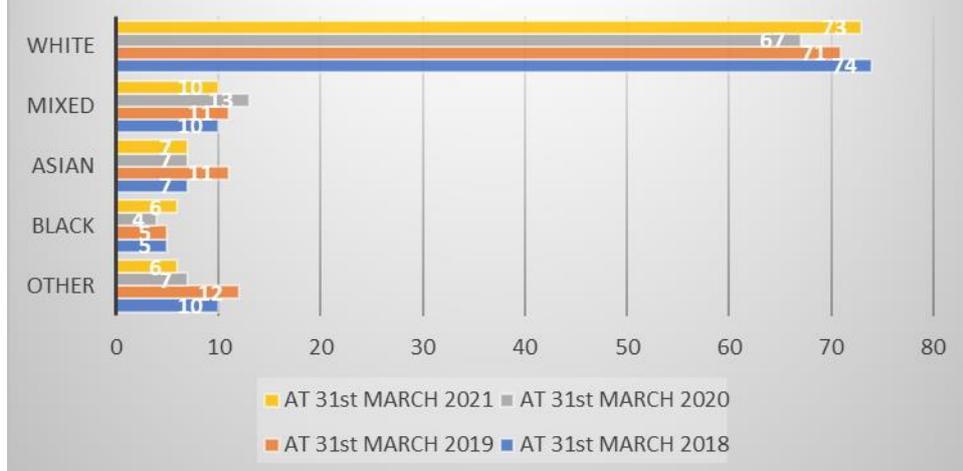
S25 – this sets out the welfare criteria which must be met before a CIC can be placed in secure accommodation

Appendix 2: Local Context – Children in Care

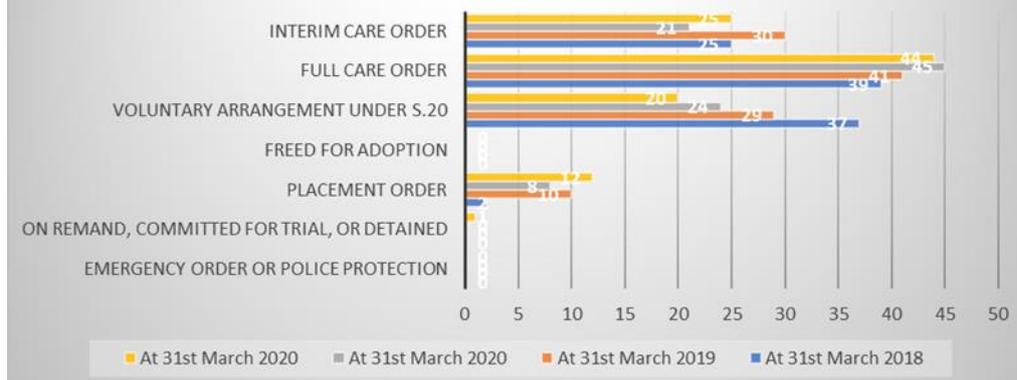
Our Children in Care



Children in Care by Ethnicity



Legal Status of Children in Care

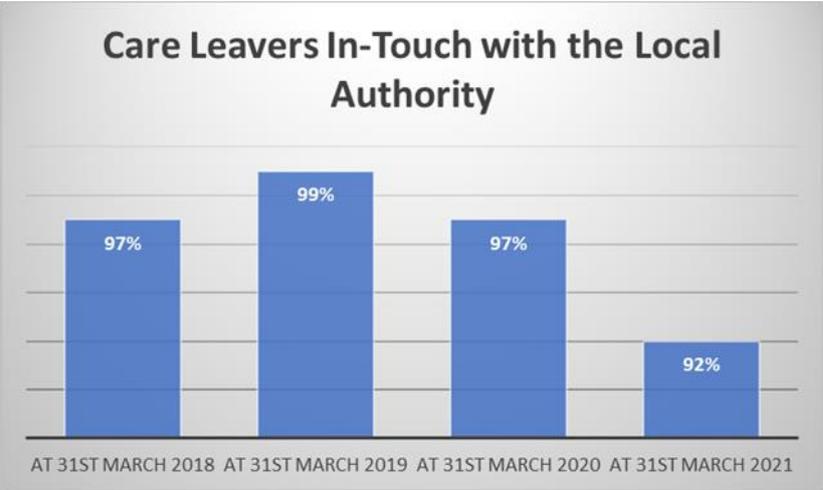
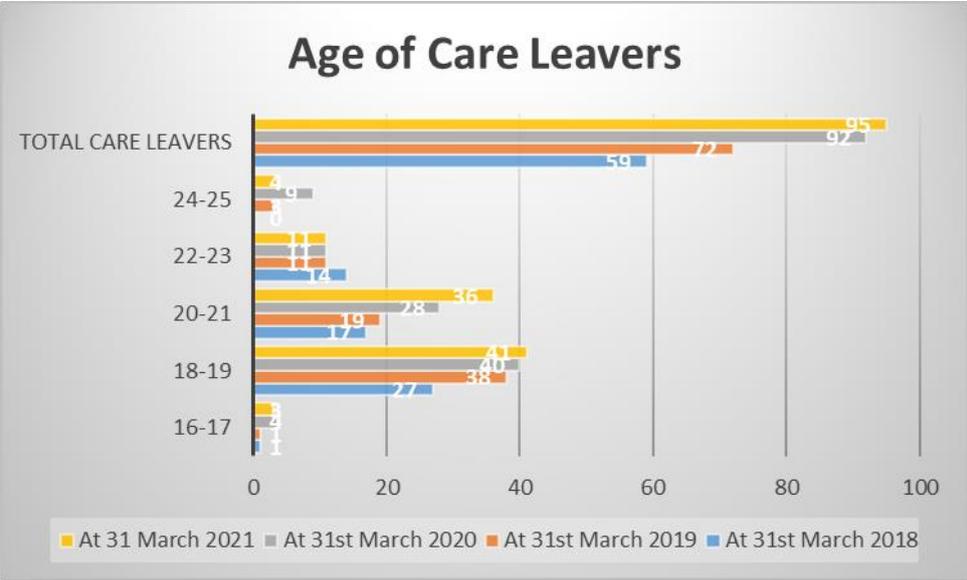


Category of Need of Children in Care

Category of Need	At 31st March 2018	At 31st March 2019	At 31st March 2020	At 31st March 2021
Abuse or Neglect	56 (53%)	59 (54%)	57 (58%)	56 (55%)
Child's Disability	5 (5%)	6 (5%)	6 (6%)	6 (6%)
Parent's Illness or Disability	4 (4%)	6 (5%)	6 (6%)	12 (12%)
Family in Acute Stress	11 (10%)	10 (9%)	9 (9%)	10 (10%)
Family Dysfunction	12 (11%)	15 (14%)	10 (10%)	8 (8%)
Socially Unacceptable Behaviour	1 (1%)	0	1 (1%)	1 (1%)
Low Income	0	0	0	0

Absent Parenting	17 (16%)	14 (13%)	9 (9%)	9 (9%)
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Our Care Leavers



Appendix 3: Children in Care and Care Leavers

What is a Child in Care?

In England and Wales the term 'looked after children' is defined in law under the Children Act 1989. A child is looked after by a local authority if they are in care or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. Looked after children are also often referred to as children in care, a term which many children and young people prefer. In general, children in care:

- live with foster parents,
- live in a residential children's home
- live in residential settings like schools or secure units
- or are a child placed under a care order

Why do children enter care?

There are a variety of reasons why children and young people enter care;

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parent(s) (section 20) - for example, if the parent(s) are too unwell to look after their child or if their child has a disability and needs respite care. In these circumstances the parental responsibility will remain with the Parent(s).
- Children who are the subject of a care order (section 31) or an interim care order (a temporary care order under section 38) - Children's services may have intervened because they felt the child was at significant risk of harm.
- Children who are the subject of emergency orders for their protection (section 44 and 46);
- Children who are compulsorily accommodated. This includes children taken into custody or children subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (section 21).
- The child could be an unaccompanied asylum seeker, with no responsible adult to care for them.

When do children stop being looked after?

A child stops being looked after when they are adopted, return home, or turn 18.

What is a Care Leaver?

A care leaver is someone who has spent time in foster or residential care, or in other arrangements outside their immediate or extended family before the age of 18.

Who is eligible for care leavers' support?

Children leaving care at 18 are entitled to support from their local authority until they are at least 21. For some children this will mean staying on with their foster carers, for others alternative accommodation options will be required. Young people who are entitled to care leavers support are either:

- **Eligible child** is a child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who is still being looked after
- **Relevant child** is a child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who has left care. This also includes young people who were detained (e.g. in a youth offending institution or hospital) when they turned 16, but who were looked after immediately before being detained

- **Former relevant child** is a young person over 18 who was previously 'eligible' or 'relevant'. Councils support this group until aged 21, or longer if they are in education or training
- **Qualifying child** is any young person under 21 (or 24 if in education or training) who stops being looked after or accommodated in a variety of other settings, or being privately fostered, after the age of 16. This also includes young people who are under a special guardianship order
- **Former relevant child** pursuing education is any former relevant child whose case was closed, for any reason. If we are informed that they are planning to continue education or training they can ask the council for support. If eligible, any help would last until their 25th birthday

How do we help care leavers?

Local authorities have a duty to help their care leavers' transition into adulthood. The government has outlined what care leavers are entitled to. This includes:

- A needs assessment. This should consider the young person's independent living skills and ability to manage their own finances. The aim of the needs assessment is to ensure that the young person leaves local authority support at a time that is right for them.
- Developing a pathway plan with the young person. This helps to set out the support that will be provided to the care leaver once they have left care.
- A personal advisor *. When the child turns 16 they will be appointed a personal advisor who will help them plan for their future. The Personal Advisor can help the care leaver access other support services which they might need. This may include mental health support, debt planning and budgeting, housing and accommodation, benefits and education. Just like social workers, personal advisors will meet with the young person every 6 months when they are over 18, until they turn 25.

**This is the national guidance, in Wokingham Personal Advisors are allocated when the child is 17.5 although Personal Advisors are available to undertake specific pieces of work with 16 + year olds when required. Both Social Workers and Personal Advisors visit children and young people more frequently than the guidance suggests.*

Appendix 4: Meetings to Support Children in Care (CiC) and Care Leavers (CL) Operational Health of Children in Care Group

Frequency: Monthly

Purpose:

- To ensure that children in the care of Wokingham Borough Council have their health needs assessed and a plan to meet those health needs completed within statutory timescales.
- To feed into and from the Strategic CiC group and escalate emerging issues in a timely manner.
- To incorporate the Voice of the Child within all discussions and ensure the focus remains on children in care.
- To monitor performance management information:
 - % of Initial Health Assessments (IHA) completed in timescales
 - % of Review Health Assessments (RHA) completed in timescales
 - % of children with an up-to-date dental check
 - % of children aged 4-16 and in care for over 12 months with an up-to-date completed Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
 - % children with up-to-date immunisations

Membership:

- Service Manager Corporate Parenting, Wokingham Borough Council (Chair)
- Names LAC Nurse/Team Leader (Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust) (Vice Chair)
- Business Services Manager
- Team Managers within Children's Services
- Specialist Nurse for Children in Care

Children in Care Education Meetings

Frequency: 4-6 weekly

Purpose:

- Consider the educational and learning needs of individual Children in Care of statutory school age (5-16). Those aged 16+ are considered in the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) Panel meeting.
- Identify and action plan around any CiC causing concern – such as being at risk of exclusion, non-attendance, and unidentified educational needs.
- Identify and involve relevant partners in supporting CiC Education i.e. Education Welfare, Health, YOS, Schools/Colleges.
- Identify common factors or issues that may be causing issues for individual CiC and to work to remove barriers to learning.

Membership:

- Service Manager, Corporate Parenting
- Virtual Head
- SEND Manager
- Team Manager Here4You

NEET Meeting

Frequency: 4-6 weekly

Purpose:

- Consider the educational and learning needs of individual post-16 young people who are currently NEET.
- Identify an action plan around the young person's NEET status and record it on the case management system.
- Identify and involve relevant partners in supporting Care Leavers' education i.e. Youth Offending Service (YOS), Schools, Colleges.
- Identify common factors that may be contributing to the lack of or insufficient interest in education, training or employment and target these needs.

Membership:

- Service Manager, Corporate Parenting
- Virtual School Head
- NEET Manager
- Team Manager (Here4You)
- Personal Advisors (Here4You)
- Elevate NEET Prevention Team
- Adult and Education NEET Manager

Placement Stability Meetings

Frequency: 4 weekly

Purpose:

- To ensure that placement stability is central to supporting outcomes for children in care. Well-planned placements reduce the need for placement changes and emergency placements. The placement meeting will consider:
 - Permanency planning
 - Better decision-making around placements and risk assessment around additional children in placements where there are already other children placed.
 - More effective matching.
 - Increased partnership with foster carers.
 - Additional support for foster carers.
 - Support for children/young people in placement.
 - Developing better relationships with the supervising social worker (SSW) and case holding social worker (CSW) to support good placement outcomes.
 - Clarify roles of SSW and CSW.
 - Work together to ensure that there are strategies to support placements from the start and provide urgent support when a placement is at risk of breakdown.
 - Learning from placements which are going well.
 - Pick up on emerging issues.

Objectives and Outcomes:

- Improve the status, security and stability of long-term foster care.
- Strengthen the team around the child in care.
- Ensure that placement decisions are made in the best interest of the child or young person.
- Reduce the number of placement moves.
- More effective matching.
- Ensure that children and young people only experience one placement whilst in care.
- Effective and efficient use of the placements available.
- Build stability and better understand factors leading to instability.
- Ensure placements support positive transitions to adulthood.
- Permanency planning.

Membership:

- Service Manager, Corporate Parenting
- Team Manager, ATM (Fostering)
- Team Manager, ATM (Here4You)
- Team Manager, Compass Team
- Other Team Managers, Social Workers, and Independent Reviewing Officers as appropriate.

Cross-Team Working – Housing and Social Care

Frequency: 4-6 weekly

Purpose:

- By working together, housing authorities and children's services can better ensure that as a corporate parent, the appropriate accommodation and support is available to care leavers, and avoid homelessness, B&B, and temporary accommodation.

Areas addressed in meetings include:

- Arrangements for achieving planned, supportive transitions to independent living.
- Identifying homelessness risk early and acting to prevent it.
- Providing a quick, safe and joined up response to care leavers who do become homeless.
- Putting in place the right support when issues are flagged such as rent arrears.
- Preparing young people for the reality of housing options.
- Reducing housing crises
- Successfully managing longer term move-on and support options.

Membership:

- Service Manager, Corporate Parenting
- Team Manager, Assistant Team Manager, Here4You
- Personal Advisor, Here4You
- Housing income team

- Homelessness reduction team
- Rents officer
- Tenancy sustainment officers

Permanency Tracker Meetings

Frequency: 2 weekly

Purpose:

- To ascertain how the child's permanence needs are going to be met for cases that are in PLO, Care Proceedings, subject to Placement Orders, Placement with Parents and Private Law.
- To monitor the progress of plans/assessments which should incorporate parallel planning where appropriate.
- To ensure all plans are progressed in a timely manner and drift and delay is avoided.
- To track permanency planning through to the point it is secured for the child (i.e. permanent return to family network, adoption order, special guardianship order, child arrangement order or approved match to a permanent fostering placement).

Membership:

- Service Manager, Safeguarding (Chair)
- Service Manager, Corporate Parenting (Chair)
- Team Manager, Fostering
- Team Manager, Adoption Team
- Team Managers/Assistant Team Managers, ABC Teams, Here4You, Children with Disabilities team
- Case holding Social Workers (presenting their case)

Appendix 5: About Corporate Parenting

What is a Corporate Parent?

A corporate parent is an organisation or person in power who has special responsibilities towards Children in Care and Care Leavers. The Corporate Parent for Children in Care and Care Leavers in Wokingham is the whole council, including Councillors and Officers at all levels and in all areas of service delivery, led by the Director of Children's Services, and the Executive Member for Children's Services.

What's the role of the Local Authority in supporting children in care and care leavers?

The role that councils play in looking after children is one of the most important things they do. Local authorities have a unique responsibility to the children they look after and their care leavers. However, it is vital that all parts of a local authority beyond those directly responsible for care and pathway planning recognise they have a key role too.

The Corporate Parenting Ethos

Corporate Parents recognise that children in care and care leavers have the same needs as other children – to be loved, cared for and feel safe, but also that there are unique challenges that children in care and care leavers face. Corporate parents aim to do everything they can for children in care and care leavers. The main question that local authorities should ask in taking on this important role is: 'Would this be good enough for my child?'

Why do we need a Corporate Parenting Ethos?

Children in care start at a disadvantage. 60% of children come into the care system due to abuse or neglect and they have poorer educational and health outcomes than their peers. Local authorities with a strong corporate parenting philosophy recognise that the care system is not just about keeping children safe, but also about promoting recovery, resilience and well-being. All children need love and stability in order to thrive, so a strong corporate parenting ethos means that everyone from the Chief Executive down to front line staff, as well as elected council members, are concerned about those children as if they were their own. This is evidenced by an embedded culture where council officers do all that is reasonably possible to ensure the council is the best 'parent' it can be to the child or young person. The guidance on the role of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children describes how those roles set the tone for the local authority to be an effective corporate parent.

What legislations does this guidance refer to?

- Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Part 3 of the Children Act 1989 (the Act)
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (the 2010 Regulations)
- The Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 (the Care Leavers Regulations)

The Corporate Parenting Principles

The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must follow when exercising their duties in relation to children in care and care leavers. They are as follows:

1. *To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;*
2. *To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;*
3. *To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;*
4. *To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;*
5. *To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;*
6. *For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and*
7. *To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.*

Why do we need Corporate Parenting Principles?

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced corporate parenting principles so that local authorities in England have something to refer whenever they exercise a function in relation to children in care or care leavers. They are also needed to help promote the welfare of children in care during their time in care to help children feel secure and nurtured.

Who do the principles apply to?

The corporate parenting principles apply only to local authorities led by Directors of Children's Services and Executive Lead Members for Children Services. Nevertheless, ensuring that relevant partners understand how they can assist local authorities and apply the principles in relation to the services those partners may provide is very important too. 'Relevant partners' include local policing bodies and Chief Officers of Police, local probation boards and probation services, youth offending teams, clinical commissioning groups, NHS England, schools and educational institutions.

Appendix 6: Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

What is an unaccompanied asylum seeking child (UASC)?

An unaccompanied asylum seeking child is a child or young person person who:

- Is under 18 years of age when the asylum application is submitted;
- Is applying for asylum in their own right; and
- Is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who in law or by custom has responsibility to do so.

UASC in Wokingham

As of yet Wokingham Council has never made a distinction between UASC in care/care leavers and other children who may have had a different route into care when considering their rights and entitlements. Depending on circumstances (safeguarding/age etc.) we may seek an order through the court to enable us to hold PR for the child but this is not done frequently. In Wokingham, at the time of writing, we have one UASC accommodated under a full care order (Section 31 of the Children Act). UASC are accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act the same as any other children needing accommodating.

Why do UASC need extra support?

UASC need extra support for lots of reasons, including;

- Some will have come from war torn countries or countries where their beliefs or way of life will have been persecuted. They also may have even been trafficked here or been victims of modern day slavery. Because of this they will likely need counselling to help them deal with their past traumas.
- They may have no family, or what family they do have will be very far away.
- Changing countries and cultures is a lot to take in so they may feel very alone.
- They will need help learning English and will need someone who speaks their language to help them communicate their wishes, opinions and feelings.
- Being rehomed in a new country will be scary and daunting they'll need extra attention to make sure they're adjusting to their new life, and still carrying out any religious or cultural aspects from their previous life that they wish to continue.

Are UASC entitled to Care Leavers support?

If a UASC was a Child in Care for over 13 weeks prior to their 18th birthday, they will be eligible for leaving care support from the local authority. However, if they are refused (further) leave to remain and exhaust all their rights of appeal (becoming 'appeal rights exhausted' or 'ARE'), the local authority may refuse them leaving care support, subject to a Human Rights Assessment (Schedule 3, Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002).

What legislation affects UASC?

Section 67 Immigration Act 2016 (the Dubs Amendment)

Under the Dubs Amendment children can be transferred from Europe to the UK, and also from local authority to local authority within the UK. They can also be transferred from the Middle East and North Africa under **the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS)**. Like other asylum seekers, a child will be on immigration bail (temporary admission) while their asylum claim is determined and they may be granted refugee status or humanitarian protection (HP).

The Dublin III Regulation

A person's asylum application should be determined in the first EU Member State where they arrive. However, with UASC the Member State responsible is that where a family member of the child is legally present, then it's decided if the relative can take care of the child, provided that it is in the child's best interests. 'Family member' includes parent/person responsible by law /custom for the child. The Home Office investigates whether a family member is related to the child and whether they are legally present in the UK. If the Home Office establishes a family link, they will ask the local authority where the family member is living to assess them.

Section 67 of the Immigration Act

Unlike other asylum seekers, if UASC are refused refugee status/humanitarian protection, they may receive UASC leave if there are no adequate reception arrangements in the country to which they would be returned if leave to remain was not granted. This lasts for 30 months or until the child is 17 ½, whichever is first.

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989

This imposes a general duty on local authorities to safeguard children within their area who are in need. If it is deemed there is no responsible adult to care for them or they are separated or 'unaccompanied' they are considered 'in need'. The relevant local authority children's social services department has a duty to assess such children under section 17, and then, almost always, to accommodate them under **section 20 of the Children Act 1989**.

Calais Leave

A child/young person will be granted Calais Leave if they were transferred to the UK between October 2016 - July 2017 in connection with the Calais camp clearance, for the purpose of being reunited with family in the UK. Calais Leave is for five years and can be renewed for a further five years at the end of which an application can be made for indefinite leave to remain without paying a fee.

Useful Links:

Berkshire child protection procedures

https://proceduresonline.com/berks/wokingham/p_ch_from_abroad.html

Government documents on the transfer UASC's:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children-interim-national-transfer-scheme>

Government guidance to funding of UASC's in local

councils <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children-uasc-grant-instructions>

Appendix 7: The Virtual School for Children in Care and Care Leavers

What is the Virtual School?

Every local authority in England has the statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of Children in Care (CiC) (including those placed outside the authority area) and children who were previously in care. This local authority function is known as the “Virtual School”.

Why do children in care and children who were previously in care need additional educational support?

CiC start with the disadvantage of their pre-care experiences, often have special educational needs, and can miss out on the educational support and aspiration a parent provides to their child. As part of the local authority’s corporate parenting role for CiC, then, the Virtual School acts as their educational advocate.

For a child who has previously been in care, although the local authority is no longer the corporate parent, the Virtual School will be a source of advice and information to help their parents or carers advocate for them as effectively as possible.

The Personal Education Plan (PEP)

All CiC are required to have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is part of the child’s care plan or detention placement plan.

It is an evolving record of what needs to happen for children in care to enable them to make at least expected progress and fulfil their potential. The PEP reflects the importance of a personalised approach to learning that meets the child’s identified educational needs, raises aspirations and builds life chances.

The Virtual School Head

Every authority is required to appoint a Virtual School Head (VSH), employed by the authority, or by another authority. The VSH is the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority’s children in care, including those placed out of authority.

VSHs ensure that the educational attainment and progress of children in care is monitored and evaluated as if those children attended a single school.

The VSH is responsible for making sure that there are effective systems in place to:

- Maintain an up-to-date roll of its CiC who are in school or college settings, and gather information about their education placement, attendance and educational progress;
- Ensure sufficient information about a child’s mental health, Special Educational Needs (SEN) or disability is available to their education setting so that appropriate support can be provided;
- Inform head teachers and designated teachers in schools if they have a child on roll who is in the care of the VSH’s local authority;
- Ensure social workers, designated teachers and schools, carers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) understand their role and responsibilities in initiating,

developing, reviewing and updating the child's PEP and how they help meet the needs identified in that PEP;

- Ensure up-to-date, effective and high quality PEPs which focus on educational outcomes, and that all children in care, wherever they are placed, have such a PEP;
- Avoid drift or delay in providing suitable educational provision, including special educational provision, and unplanned termination of educational arrangements through proactive, multi-agency cooperation. Where this requires negotiation with other authorities, this should be completed in a timely manner and with the best interests of the child as paramount;
- Ensure the educational achievement of children in care is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare; and
- Report regularly on the attainment, progress and school attendance of children in care through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

The Wokingham Virtual School

The vision for the Wokingham Virtual School (WVS) is that all CiC achieve expected or better than expected levels of progress and that the difference between their achievement and that of children not in care is diminished. This will be achieved through working at a strategic and operational level within the local authority and with the many partners of schools, health, voluntary sector, members, carers and young people.

The work of the WVS falls into three categories:

- a. Operational support for children and young people through effective local support and use of the Pupil Premium Plus budget;
- b. Ongoing training for multi-agency professionals, elected members and carers; and
- c. Tracking, monitoring and evaluating outcomes and practice, identifying and securing service improvements.

The WVS has recently expanded its offer to include CiC beyond the statutory school age of 5-16 and aspires to provide the best possible 0-25 years' service. As of September 2020, recruitment to several new roles in the WVS is underway.

Further Reading

DfE (2018) *Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children. Statutory guidance for local authorities.* Ref: DFE-00053-2018.

THE PLEDGE

These are our promises to you 

YOUR EDUCATION

We will do everything we can to make sure you have the best education possible.
We will have planning meetings to make sure you get all the help you need to learn and succeed, we will make sure you are part of all meetings. We will make sure you have all the equipment you need for your education.

YOUR HEALTH

We will help you to be healthy on the inside and outside.
We will make sure you have health assessments and ensure these are done in a way that suits you.
We will support the development of your identity, self-esteem and well being.
We will offer you counselling if you need it.

YOUR SOCIAL WORKER

We will make sure you know why you are in care and what the plan is for you.
We will get to know you, listen to you and make sure your opinion is heard in all that we do.
We will involve you in all meetings about you.
We will support you to have contact with family and friends.

YOUR VOICE

We will listen if you have a complaint or a compliment.
We will make sure you can speak to someone if there are things you are worried about, and if you find it difficult to say what you want to we will make sure you have an advocate.
We have a children in care council that you can become a member of to meet other children in care and have a say on things that might matter to you.

WHERE YOU LIVE

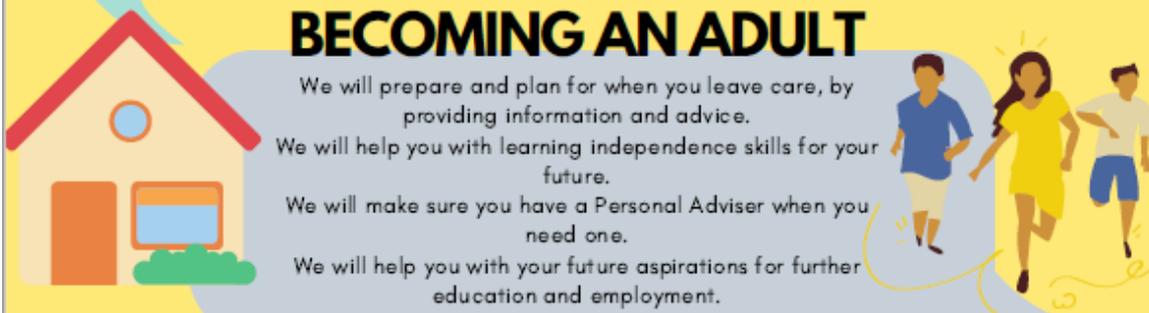
We will keep you safe and give you a safe place to live.
We will do our best to give you information about your placement before you move and give you a choice of foster carer.
We will ensure your carer supports you with every aspect of your life.

YOUR ACTIVITIES

We promise to ensure you have fun.
We will encourage you to take part in at least one leisure activity of your choice.
We will help you celebrate important dates including birthdays and religious festivals.

BECOMING AN ADULT

We will prepare and plan for when you leave care, by providing information and advice.
We will help you with learning independence skills for your future.
We will make sure you have a Personal Adviser when you need one.
We will help you with your future aspirations for further education and employment.



Appendix 9: Health and Wellbeing of Children in Care

Local authorities have a duty of care under the Children Act 1989 to look after the children in their care, wherever they are placed. There are systems in place so that this duty is properly carried out.

Why do children in care need extra medical attention?

Most children come into the care of a local authority because of abuse and neglect, and because of their past experiences children in care may need extra help and attention. Delays in identifying and meeting their emotional and physical needs can have effects on all aspects of their lives, including their chances of reaching their potential and leading happy and healthy lives as adults.

What does the council offer medically to children in care?

- A health assessment of physical, emotional and mental health needs. This assessment will be carried out by a registered medical practitioner.
- A health plan. The initial health assessment should result in a health plan, which should be written within 20 working days of the child coming into care. The health plan forms part of the child's overall care plan.
- A review of the health plan. This must happen at least once every six months until a child is five years old, and at least once every 12 months after that. The review health assessment may be carried out by a registered nurse or registered midwife.

What do the council aim to achieve when caring for the looked after children's health?

- That looked-after children opinions and wishes are listened to;
- That the child or young person's age and understanding is taken into account in identifying and meeting their physical, emotional and mental health needs; and
- To try to help other relevant people including carers and schools to understand the importance of listening to and taking account the child's wishes and feelings about how to be healthy.

What is an SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire)?

The SDQ is a clinically proven behavioral assessment questionnaire for use with 4-17 year olds or 2-4 year olds. It is internationally validated and simple to carry out. It exists in three versions: for parents or carers, teachers, and children aged 4-17. The SDQ is made up of a series of statements that require a judgement on how well it describes the child by ticking one or three or four boxes for each question.

Why do we use SDQ's?

It is important to have some means of measuring on a regular basis the emotional and behavioral difficulties experienced by children in care at a national level. The SDQ provides information to help social workers form an idea about the emotional wellbeing of individual children in care.

Glossary of Terms Used in Relation to the Health and Wellbeing of Children in Care

Designated professional: CCGs are required to have access to the expertise of a designated doctor and nurse for children in care, whose role is to assist commissioners in fulfilling their responsibilities to improve the health of children in care.

Designated teacher: all maintained schools and academies are required to have a designated teacher for children in care. Their role is to act as a source of advice and expertise and to champion the needs of children in care within the school as well as work with the local authority with whom the child is in care to ensure his or her personal education plan (PEP) is developed and implemented.

Distant placement: Regulation 11(5) of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (England) 2010 as amended defines a distant placement as meaning 'a placement outside the area of the responsible authority and not within the area of any adjoining local authority'. Distant placements must be approved by the responsible authority's Director of Children's Services (DCS).

Eligible child: a child aged 16 or 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who is still being looked after.

Former relevant child: is a young person over 18 who was previously 'eligible' or 'relevant'. Councils support this group until aged 21, or longer if they are in education or training.

Former relevant child pursuing education is any former relevant child whose case was closed, for any reason. If we are informed that they are planning to continue education or training they can ask the council for support. If eligible, any help would last until their 25th birthday.

Child in Care: a child who is in the care of a local authority (referred to as a child in care) is defined in section 22 of the Children Act 1989 and means a child who is subject to a care order (or an interim care order) or who is accommodated by a local authority.

Named health professional: providers of health services are expected to identify a named doctor and nurse for children in care. As well as coordinating the provision of services for individual children, named professionals provide advice and expertise for fellow professionals.

Originating authority (sometimes called the responsible or placing authority): the local authority with whom the child is in care.

Originating Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) (sometimes called the home or responsible CCG): when a child in care is placed out of authority, the originating CCG is the CCG in whose area the child is placed before that move. The originating CCG remains the responsible commissioner for CCG-commissioned services.

Placement out of area (sometimes referred to as an out of authority placement): a placement out of the local authority's area is one that is a placement in foster care, a residential children's home or in 'other arrangements' located outside the boundary of the responsible authority. An out of authority placement could be in an adjoining local authority or in a more distant area

Primary care team: typically includes GPs, practice nurses, community nurses, midwives, health visitors, the GP practice manager and support staff

Qualifying child is a young person under 21 (or 24 if in education or training) who stops being looked after or accommodated in a variety of other settings, or being privately fostered, after the age of 16. This also includes young people who are under a special guardianship order.

Receiving authority: the local authority area in which the local authority with whom the child is in care places him or her.

Receiving CCG: in the case of a placement out of authority, the receiving CCG is the CCG to whose area the child in care is moved.

Registered medical practitioner: any doctor who treats patients in NHS or private practice must be registered with the General Medical Council and hold a license to practice.

Relevant child: is a child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who has left care. This also includes young people who are detained (e.g in a youth offending institution or hospital) when they turned 16, but who were looked after immediately before being detained.

For more detailed information see: DfE/DoH (2015) Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked After Children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups and NHS England. Available online

at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-health-and-wellbeing-of-looked-after-children--2>

Appendix 10: Foster Carer Recruitment & Retention

To ensure the best prospects for looked after children and their carers, the family placement team are focused on making sure as many looked after children as possible are placed with Wokingham Borough approved carers in stable placements.

What are our goals at Wokingham Borough Council?

- To be able to meet the needs of the diverse range of local children that need foster placements, it is important that we recruit new local foster carers living within the Wokingham Borough.
- The aim of the Wokingham Foster Carer Recruitment & Retention Policy is to improve recruitment and maintenance of our in-house foster carers and to increase capacity and choice of in-house placements, reduce out of area placements, and improve availability of foster care for all children in care.
- The service aims to be responsive and to adapt its planned recruitment activity to meet any newly identified needs and priorities as these arise.
- Our target for recruitment going forward is 10 new foster carers that reflect the needs of the children requiring placements.

What are we looking for in a Foster Carer?

We are looking for:

- A diverse range of foster carers, in terms of race, culture, sexual orientation, and religion.
- High quality carers who are able to look after teenagers, babies, sibling groups, children seeking asylum, children with disabilities and parent and child placements.

And we will prioritise those applicants with the time and energy to devote to fostering, ideally in those households in which one carer fosters full time so that children receive the attention they require.

What support and training will you receive as a Foster Carer?

- 'Skills to foster' course - [visit the Fostering Network website to find out more](#)
- Regular contact and support from a fostering social worker
- 24 hour support from our fostering team
- Foster carer's helpline
- Local support groups and family activities
- Regular newsletters
- WBC will also continue to develop our offer to foster carers in terms of support and financial compensation. Our therapeutic support group was introduced at the end of last year and will remain a regular monthly opportunity

What are we doing to improve this area?

- In January 2020 adverts went out for specialist foster carers who would be offered an enhanced fee and specialist support to care for children returning from residential children's homes, secure placements and hospitals. There was no response to these adverts and so we are looking at creative ways in which we can target such members of the public in the coming year.
- We are targeting those in related employment such as teachers, nurses, youth workers, social workers and advertising the financial offer for foster carers in WBC including council tax exemption so that it becomes worthwhile for those in related professions to give up work to foster. The aim would be to match their current salaries while working from home.

Appendix 11: Linked Strategies and Policies

