

Report for Corporate Parenting: 21 February 2017

One Year On - Implementing the Pledge for Children in Care

Introduction

The Pledge is a promise made by Derby City Council to all children in their care. The Pledge is part of Derby's commitment to give children in their care the best opportunities they can have in life. The Pledge is a commitment about the support and services children in care can expect to receive. All adults who work for and with the Council are required to make a commitment to work to the Pledge at all times.

Care Matters (2007) identified underpinning principles that Local Authorities must adhere to in complying with the basic statutory duties relating to looked after children. It places a responsibility on Local Authorities to ensure children in care have been consulted and involved in developing the Pledge and the regular review of the Pledge.

The new Pledge was accepted and launched at a special Corporate Parenting Committee held in the Council Chamber on 26 January 2016.

Commitments to Implementing the Pledge

As part of the launch of the Pledge all strategic and service directors from across the council were invited to attend the Corporate Parenting Committee.

Strategic and service directors were asked to give commitments outlining what their departments will do to support the Pledge and in turn exercise the council's corporate parenting responsibilities for children in care. The council departments have been busy implementing their Pledge commitments throughout 2016 and further Corporate Parenting update events were held on 26 July and 14 December 2016, when all the directors were asked to provide detailed updates and progress made on their commitments.

Many of the Pledge commitments made by the departments have been successfully implemented and completed with others where appropriate work is ongoing. This document is a compilation of the progress made on the commitments by the directorates across the council.

Peoples Directorate

- Care Leavers forum in place and has met several times. This will be an ongoing forum for care leavers to meet and share their views with the council
- A number of care leavers have been successful in gaining apprenticeships across the council. There are currently three care leavers employed. As well as this, 2 care leavers have also taken part in traineeships. Care leavers are targeted and prioritised for council apprenticeships
- As a direct result of the pledge commitments all children in care by the age of 16 are now provided with a bank account and passport.
- All social workers in children in care teams now provide a profile of themselves to young people. The profile includes a photo of the social worker as well some information. This helps the young person to get a better understanding of their social worker.
- Children in care emotional health and wellbeing service is now in place. The service is led by health and targets services for children in care.
- An innovation bid has been made to the Department of Education in partnership with a voluntary agency to provide a mentoring service for care leavers. This bid is now in the second stage.
- Managers across people's directorate made themselves available for the takeover day in November. It has been agreed that work experience opportunities like this will be made available for children in care all year round from both children's and adults services.
- Considerable work has been undertaken by the virtual school head to encourage and improve educational attainment for children in care. This has included the implementation of an 'e' pep system as well as specific incentives for children to do well, including the 100 day challenge. Work is ongoing by the SSIO's with schools to ensure our children get the support and assistance they need to succeed.
- Adults services preparing for adulthood team are continuing work to ensure all young people that meet their service criteria have an allocated social worker

Communities and Place Directorate

- Access to leisure cards has been extended to independent visitors for children in care.
- Health and live well services continue to be offered to foster carers. A new CRM system will be in place to report on referrals and take up of services
- Managers across communities and place directorate made themselves available for the takeover day in November. It has been agreed that work experience opportunities like this will be made available for children in care all year round in the directorate
- Library services continue to promote events to children in care, by promoting events to foster carers as well as residential homes. The summer reading challenge was a success with significant numbers of children from across Derby taking part.
- The Plus One Project continues to deliver a creative and cultural experience for children in care in Derby. The project is currently hosted by Derby Theatre
- Mock Interviews & CV Writing Workshops. Enterprise for Education run Mock Interview sessions for secondary school students on a monthly basis with business volunteers giving students a 1-2-1 mock interview. A specific session will be put on for Children in Care. This will be arranged through the children in care council.
- Based on interest from the children in care council, industry visits could be arranged for children in care to visit local companies to help with career planning.
- Enterprise for Education promote apprenticeship opportunities to all young people across Derby via various methods. These vacancies can be promoted to those in Care and support can be given with the application process.

Organisation and Governance

- Voices in Action forum for young people is in place and members of the children in care council attend. Useful, issues, consultations and discussions take place in the ViA forum to inform council planning and decision making. The ViA meetings will continue to take place
- There is a customer feedback policy in place that is available on the Council's website which covers all complaints including Children's Social Care complaints. Customer complaints are managed and recorded within the customer management system and details on learning / outcomes as a result of complaints are recorded alongside the details of the complaint. Complaints are reported to departmental management teams on a quarterly basis. The 2015/16 Annual Report for Children Social Care complaints which is reported to the Safeguarding Board, shows that the number of complaints in children's social care has fallen slightly in 2015/16 with 40 complaints received, 6 of which came directly from young people.
- Continue to lead on the production of management information for Children's Services. Performance during the first half of the year (2016/17) has been steady. Overall the numbers of children in care have fallen. Analysis has been provided to support the service in understanding this decline. Stability of placements continues to be strong
- Performance surgeries continue to be organised. In November 2016, a Performance Surgery took place to review and challenge the outcomes from Mocksted and considered whether further improvement actions are required. Overall good progress has been made by the service.
- Regular benchmarking information is provided so the council can compare experiences and outcomes to children in care in other areas and identify the need to challenge the service to make improvements. In 2016 Analysis of statutory returns, published by the Department for Education on children in need and child protection referrals was completed, the highlights of which were included in the Safeguarding Board Annual Report to inform our review and planning of how we prevent children and young people entering the care system.

- Analysis on the Children Looked After (CLA) benchmarking return will be done shortly (it has only just been released nationally).
- A Participation Apprentice who is a Care Leaver herself was recruited recently. A very successful social event and awards evening was organised by the apprentice for Care Leavers on 24 November.
- Support has been provided to the Care Leavers Forum to extend their use of social media, which will particularly help care leavers who have moved out of area to keep in touch.
- The Council's new Equality, Diversity and Respect Policy now includes a section on equality for Care Leavers and the Apprentice Participation Officer, who is a Care Leaver has approved this. In addition, the Officer is working with the Lead on Equality and Diversity to further enhance her skills in the subject to take into her work with young people.
- Analysis has been provided to the Director of Learning, Virtual Head and wider School Improvement team on the latest educational attainment outcomes in 2016 for children in care (and the wider city). Comparative analysis will be provided when the validated data is released by DFE to see how Derby compares to its peers.
- The directorate continues to support the implementation of the CYP Engagement Strategy working with the Director of People Services. In particular, the Voice of the Child Participation Toolkit has been finalised and this will be launched by the service shortly.
- Achievements of the participation work through 'you said we did' have been included in the Council's Annual Report for 2016.
- Managers across organisation and governance made themselves available for the takeover day in November. It has been agreed that work experience opportunities like this will be made available for children in care all year round in the directorate
- It is expected the CYP Engagement Strategy will be reviewed in early 2017

- The directorate expects to initiate two projects supporting participation of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and also Mental Health in the New Year.

Derby Homes

- Apprenticeships/Training Opportunities – In October 2016 appointed first trade traineeship. This initially went well and the care leaver seemed happy. Unfortunately after a few weeks the arrangement broke down and we were advised that this wasn't what the individual wanted. Opportunity remains listed with the care leaving team and is shared with young people who are ready to undertake opportunities.
- Appointed a young person in care to one of our business administration apprentice positions, they are due to start with us in January 2017.
- Care Leavers Housing Pathway – Colleagues in Housing Options have had a meeting with CYP managers to discuss improvements to how the care leavers pathway can be improved to help transitions from care to independent be swifter and smoother. We have agreed that housing advisors will start working on cases earlier to try and allocate a tenancy with Derby Homes before the young person turns 18. We are looking supporting them before they move in, getting the home ready and will be waiving the rent as CYP would still be paying for the in care accommodation. This will help young people have a better chance of making it work if their home feels like a home when they move in.