

MEETING:	Council
MEETING DATE:	26 September 2014
TITLE OF REPORT:	The Pledge to Children and Young People Looked After by Herefordshire Council
REPORT BY:	Director of Children's Wellbeing

Classification

Open

Key Decision

This is not an executive decision.

Wards Affected

Countywide

Purpose

To endorse the Pledge to Children and Young People in Herefordshire and further raise the profile of this vulnerable group.

Recommendation(s)

THAT: The Pledge to Children and Young People Looked After by Herefordshire Council at Appendix 1 to the report be adopted.

Alternative Options

- 1 The alternative is not to adopt the Pledge to Children and Young People Looked After by Herefordshire Council which would result in less clarity about the council's approach to corporate parenting.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 2 Looked after children are amongst the most vulnerable in our county. For reasons beyond their control, they have been taken into the care of the council and often away from members of their family. It's widely recognised that the outcomes this group, both educational and social, are poor. There is, therefore, a moral imperative to ensure that those who fulfil the role of corporate parent do all they can support the

development of this group.

- 3 The pledge has been overseen and supported by the Corporate Parenting Panel. This panel is chaired by Councillor Jenny Hyde and includes cross party membership.

Key Considerations

- 4 We know that no child chooses to be in care and that this can add extra challenges and uncertainties into their lives. The loss of day-to-day contact with parents can have a significant effect on the development of those children for whom the local authority has to provide support. One element of the role of the corporate parent is to ensure that the needs of looked after children are promoted and met. The pledge lays out the expectations for those who support, in any capacity, and work with this group.
- 5 There are both national and local expectations about the education and health we expect for our children in care and the corporate parenting panel is establishing targets for these as well as employment and other targets.
- 6 The pledge has been developed with groups of looked after young people and has resulted in three priorities: these are the things that they feel will make the greatest difference to their lives.
 - You listen to me.
 - You know me.
 - You support me when I need it.

It also contains a list of aspirational activities that every child should experience: Children in the care of the council should be no different and during their time in care they should also have access to the same life experiences.

- 7 The activities, based on those found to be successful in the London Challenge, have been adapted by the working group of looked after young people to make sense to them and with the aim of raising their aspirations.
 - a) I will have had the chance to express my views on issues related to looked after children in Herefordshire and will know I have been listened to.
 - b) My talents (academic, sporting or creative) will have been celebrated – at school or outside.
 - c) I will have taken part in a public event – either sports, dance, concert or visual arts.
 - d) I will have taken part in a play, musical or reading that involves either acting, speaking or helping with the productions.
 - e) I will have been on an educational visit or overnight stay.
 - f) I will have the opportunity to help others through voluntary activities.
 - g) I will have been to an artistic or sporting event at a major venue.
 - h) I will have the opportunity to learn about and understand other cultures and faiths.
 - i) I will have planned, delivered and evaluated a project from beginning to end.
 - j) I will have experienced cutting-edge science and technology.

Community Impact

- 8 The pledge describes our aspirations to help improve the outcomes for a particularly vulnerable group of Herefordshire young people. The aim is to ensure the local authority does all in its power to give these young people the chance to experience what they deserve and to use the wider resources available within the county to achieve this.

Equality and Human Rights

- 9 The pledge is for all those children and young people who are the legal responsibility of Herefordshire Council. It will apply equally to those looked after children who have special educational needs or a disability.

Financial Implications

- 10 The cost implications are minimal. The pledge will be published as an electronic document and circulated to all those who work with looked after children.
- 11 It is expected that the aspirational activities will be supported by those caring for and educating the young people. It should also be noted that the young people have accepted their responsibility for funding some activities and the Children in Care Council is actively fundraising to support these.

Legal Implications

- 12 Implementation of the Pledge is not mandatory however it would support the Council in meeting its duties towards Looked After Children as set out in Sections 3(a) and 3A of the Children's Act 1989 in that a local authority has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children including a particular duty to promote a child's educational achievement.

Risk Management

- 13 With the pledge in place and effectively communicated, we will have a stronger base with which to improve the outcomes for the children and young people looked after by Herefordshire.

Consultees

- 14 The pledge has been developed in consultation with a group of children and young people in care.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Pledge to Children and Young People Looked After by Herefordshire.

Background Papers

None.