

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022 - 2024



Contents

An open letter to children and young people with care experience	4
What is ‘corporate parenting’?	5
So, what’s the plan?	5
Our vision for all children and young people in Herefordshire	6
The lived experience of care.....	7
The Herefordshire Approach	7
How we will hear the voice of children and young people.....	10
At a glance: care experience in Herefordshire I will update these details.....	13
Outcomes for children and young people with care experience.....	16
Corporate Parenting Strategy cycle.....	34
Delivering on our aims, making a difference, and improving lives	34
Appendices	36

An open letter from children and young people with care experience

Dear Corporate Parents,

We are children and young people who have experience of Herefordshire's care.

As our Corporate Parents we want you to think about how you care for us, support us and help us reach our aspirations. We want to be respected for who we are as individuals. This means showing us that you care in every way that you can - by listening to us and hearing us. By making sure that we have the right care and support where and when we need it.

Communication is really important to us. Treat us how you would expect to be treated and don't be patronising. Be honest with us, listen to us, and be open-minded about how best to get to know us. Ask us the best way to work with us e.g. go for a walk when we meet – not always during the day and sometimes at the weekend; go for a coffee. Speak to us informally as this is more natural. Formal conversations/terminology create a hierarchy which can make our voices unclear. And remember you were once a child, a teenager and then a young adult. We won't always get it right but you need to be there to catch us when we fall to make sure we will be okay.

We want you to listen to our views. This might be about asking how we are and how we are feeling. Make sure you understand what we are really saying and feeling by checking back in with us. It is really important that you show how you respect us and our experience in real ways. Remember, we are all unique individuals, who are children and young people first and foremost. We are not defined by our care experience.

Finally, we expect you to do what you say you will do, stick to your promises and not make excuses. We want to have good relationships with the people who work with us, who are flexible, willing and open-minded to always try and do what is best for us.

Herefordshire Children in Care and Care Leavers Voice Group

An open letter to children and young people with care experience

Dear children and young people with care experience,

We are your Corporate Parents with a responsibility to keep you safe and well, and support you to get the very best out of life. We will do this by supporting you with your education, ensuring you have suitable, safe housing options close to home; by making sure you can access health support when and where you need it and, by making sure we review all of these regularly to make sure they meet your needs.

We are all passionate about making Herefordshire a place where all children and young people have the best possible start in life and are able to access all the things that they need to feel loved, learn, grow and have fun and to reach your aspirations. We want young people to go on to become well-rounded, resilient and independent young adults who are engaged and thriving members of their local communities. We will do this by making sure your social workers and personal advisors meet with you regularly to support you with all of the above to ensure you never feel alone or unsupported. The whole of Herefordshire is made stronger as a result. We want you to know that all managers, from team managers to the Director, are part of your support network and will work with you and partners to ensure we all support your journey to adulthood.

As your Corporate Parents we want this to be true for you, as children and young people with experience of care. This means doing only the very best for you to help you flourish and thrive. We want you to feel safe, loved and cared for in our County. We want you to feel accepted for who you are, as unique individuals. We want you to be listened to, heard and understood in all that we do and deliver. We agree with you that having strong relationships with us, which are built on trust and respect, is fundamental to this.

As senior leaders in Herefordshire County Council, alongside all our hard-working and dedicated staff and carers, we are committed to being the best possible Corporate Parents we can be. This is our plan of how we aim to do this together.

Paul Walker

Chief Executive,
Herefordshire
Council

Darryl Freeman

Corporate Director
Children's Services,
Herefordshire Council

Julie Mephram

Head of Service for
Corporate Parenting,
Herefordshire Council

**Councillor Johnathan
Lester**

Leader of
Herefordshire Council

Councillor Ivan Powell

Elected Cabinet Member for
Children's Services

What is ‘Corporate Parenting’?

Corporate Parenting is our responsibility to be loving, caring and aspirational for all children and young people who are in our care, or who have recently left our care as adults.

Above all else, this means protecting children and young people from harm and keeping them safe. But, importantly, it is also about always striving for their best interests, nurturing their ambitions and helping our children and young people get the most out of life. Ultimately, it means they grow into independent and thriving young adults.

At its heart, Corporate Parenting means always asking ourselves **“would this be good enough for my child?”**

So, what’s the plan?

We have a plan for how Herefordshire can be the best possible Corporate Parents we can be. We want to be clear about what is expected of us, what we want to achieve and how we aim to do that.

Essentially, the strategy is about one thing: **making the lives and prospects of all care-experienced children and young people in Herefordshire better.**

It sounds simple, but it will take time, hard work and involve challenges along the way. But, by working together, holding each other to account, and delivering on a plan of action, we believe we can turn our words into positive outcomes in the lives of care-experienced children and young people across Herefordshire.

We have split the plan into seven outcomes, which cover every aspect of the lives and experiences of children and young people. If we make good progress against each of these, we will know we are doing what we set out to do.

Our vision for all children and young people in Herefordshire

We believe that **every** child and young person in Herefordshire should have the best possible start in life and the opportunity to thrive. We want to ensure children and young people receive the right support, at the right time, and in the right place¹.

For children and young people with care experience, **our vision is no different.**

We recognise that children and young people, who have care-experience, can face additional challenges that others their age may not. As their Corporate Parents, and in spite of these obstacles, we want them to achieve good outcomes in all aspects of their lives.

Our seven priority outcomes

Homes and Housing	Health and wellbeing	Learning, developing and having fun	Relationships, identity and belonging	Listening, hearing and understanding	Being safe and protected	Independence and adulthood
--------------------------	-----------------------------	--	--	---	---------------------------------	-----------------------------------

For this reason, our ambition to be good Corporate Parents goes far beyond any laws. Instead, we have a moral, social and economic responsibility, as public services, civil society, local communities and wider society, to work together to equip and empower our care-experienced children and young people to succeed and thrive.

The lived experience of care

What we say in the strategy comes out of the conversations we've had, both with children and young people who are currently in care, and those who have recently left our care. Not only are they the people who know first-hand what it is like to live in our care, but they are also the people who are most affected by what we say and do. Understanding and acting on their views, interests and lived experiences is fundamental to being a good Corporate Parent.

Over the last year, we have heard from children and young people with care experience in Herefordshire about some of the more specific things that they would like to see improve. These have been about the different parts of their lives, like housing, health and wellbeing, education, relationships, making their voice heard, and gaining independence later in life. Under each of our priority outcomes, we summarise what we have heard directly from children and young people.

The Herefordshire Approach

The Herefordshire Approach describes what our Corporate Parenting looks like in practice and how it feels.

Children and young people have told us that feeling secure in who they are, their identity, and what they want to achieve in life is so important. They would like to have Corporate Parents who they can turn to and rely on to 'fight their corner'.

As a result, our approach to Corporate Parenting will be about building relationships with each other which always have trust, respect and care at the centre. We want to be loving and caring Corporate Parents, who believe in our children and young people. We will be aspirational for them and encourage them to be ambitious for themselves too.

Our care and support will be there for them both in the good times and the bad. It will be unconditional and fair – **regardless of background, experiences or personal choices in life.**

Our Promise to children and young people in care

The Promise is what our care-experienced children and young people have told us they expect to see from a good corporate parent.

As Corporate Parents, we promise to:

- Support you
- Inform you
- Involve you
- Respect you
- Celebrate you

Working together

Corporate Parenting is a joint effort. Achieving the best possible outcomes for care-experienced children and young people cannot be done alone. That is why our plan for corporate parenting is agreed alongside children and young people, and by all partners of the Herefordshire Children and Families Partnership. The Partnership includes Herefordshire Council, NHS, the Police, schools and the voluntary sector.

Together, as Corporate Parents, we will work collaboratively and constructively to be the best possible parents we can be. In practice, that means sharing knowledge, resources, and understanding between us to make sure we provide support in the most effective and consistent ways.

Working restoratively

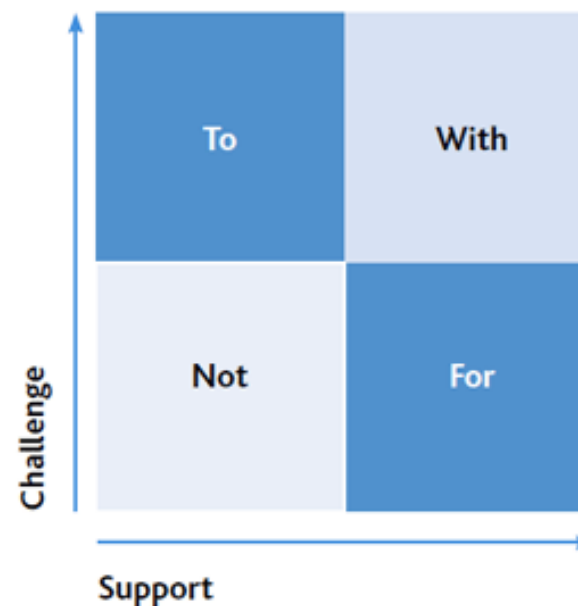
‘Restorative Practice’ is a term used to describe the behaviours, interactions and approaches which help build positive, healthy relationships, find ways to get through difficulties and repair harm where there has been conflict. Working in ‘restorative’ ways helps us get to know the children and young people we support better, build on their strengths as individuals and find solutions to problems

together. This approach will be **who we are as Corporate Parents** in Herefordshire, rather than being a specific, conscious and planned thing that we aim to do.

We will work **with** children and young people, to empower them to make positive decisions about their lives for themselves. Rather than us, the adults in positions of authority, doing things to them or for them.

We will expect everyone who works with children and young people, to know what it means to work restoratively and how to do this in practice. We are developing restorative practice by running training sessions for staff across the Partnership and developing our approach through mutual support and challenge in our meetings together.

As a result of this we hope that children, young people, and their families, will have trust in us, feel that they have better relationships with the people who support them, and that, ultimately, they are able to achieve better outcomes in their lives.



How we will hear the voice of children and young people

All children and young people have the right to be listened to and have their views considered when adults make decisions which affect them. This is one of the United Nations Rights of a Child².

Our ambition in Herefordshire is to create a culture of engagement, which is shared across organisations and services, which put the views and interests of care-experienced children and young people at the heart of all that we do. This ambition is built on the belief that truly hearing the voice of the child means co-designing services with them and is far more than one-off pieces of consultation. We believe that our services will be fairer, more effective, and more sustainable as a result.

Our intentions for participation and engagement in Herefordshire are delivered through our Children and Young People's Plan and our approach to Participation and Engagement.

How children and young people can get involved

Being the best possible Corporate Parents means engaging with children and young people with care experiences themselves and finding out what works for them. The most effective decisions have children and young people's lived experience at their heart.

What is the Virtual School and how do they support care-experienced children and young people?

Herefordshire's Virtual School aims to make sure all children in care in Herefordshire enjoy their education, have access to the highest quality learning environments and achieve the best possible outcomes. Although it is not a real school, with buildings and classrooms, the Virtual School is much like any school in helping every child fulfil their potential and thrive throughout their educational journey.

The Virtual School team works with young people, designated teachers in schools, social workers, carers, families and other professionals to make sure everyone has high aspirations and shared goals for every single child or young person in care or who has recently left our care.

Who are the health team for children and young people in care in Herefordshire?

The Children in Care Health team are a mix of Nurses, Mental Health Practitioners and Doctors.

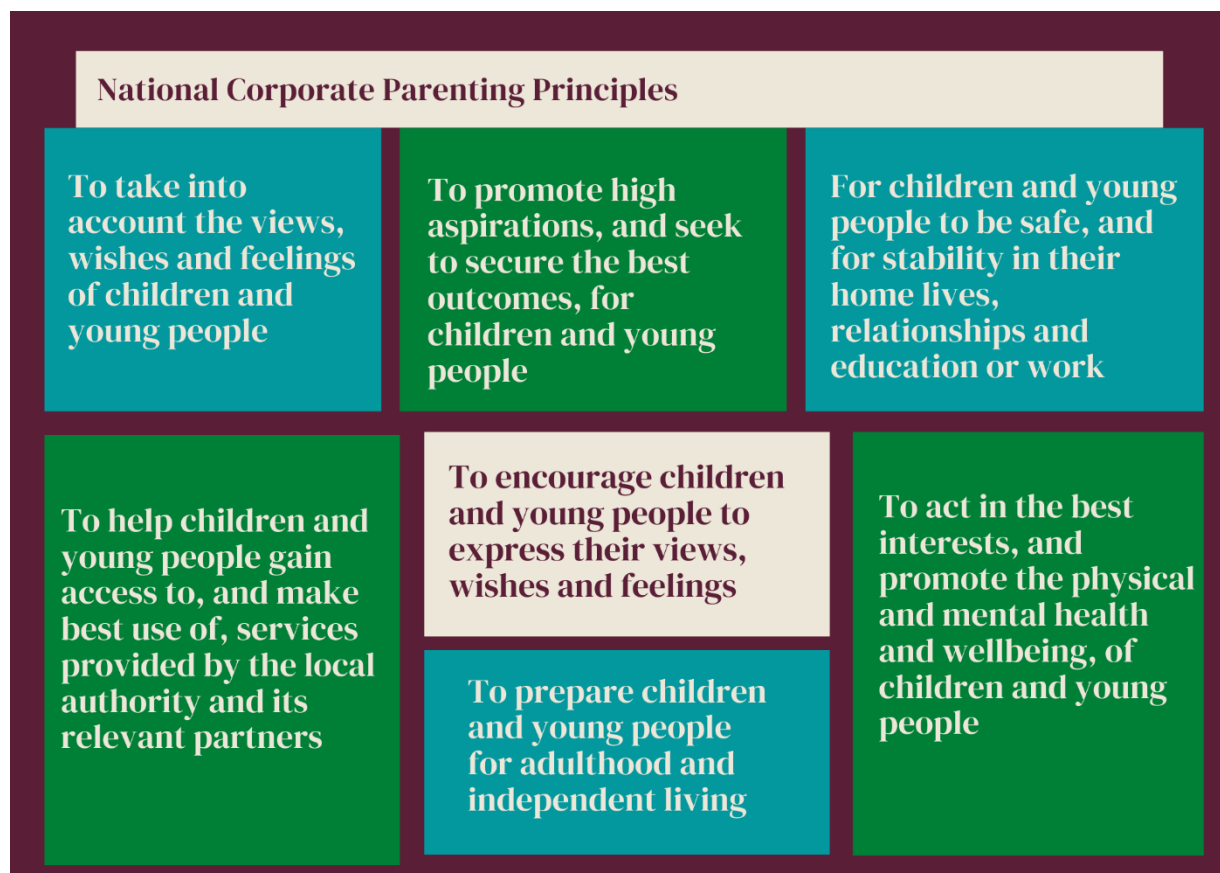
The Team are based at Belmont Abbey and are a team of experienced Nurses and Doctors who will see you throughout your time as a children or young people in care. We want you have good health and be able to get the right health support when you require it wherever you are living and whoever you are living with. We will see you for annual health reviews and support you with any health concerns or worries that you or your foster care have.

The Children in Care Health Team can be contacted by telephone on 01432 363941 or via our team email at lac.team@nhs.net.

Who are Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and what is their role?

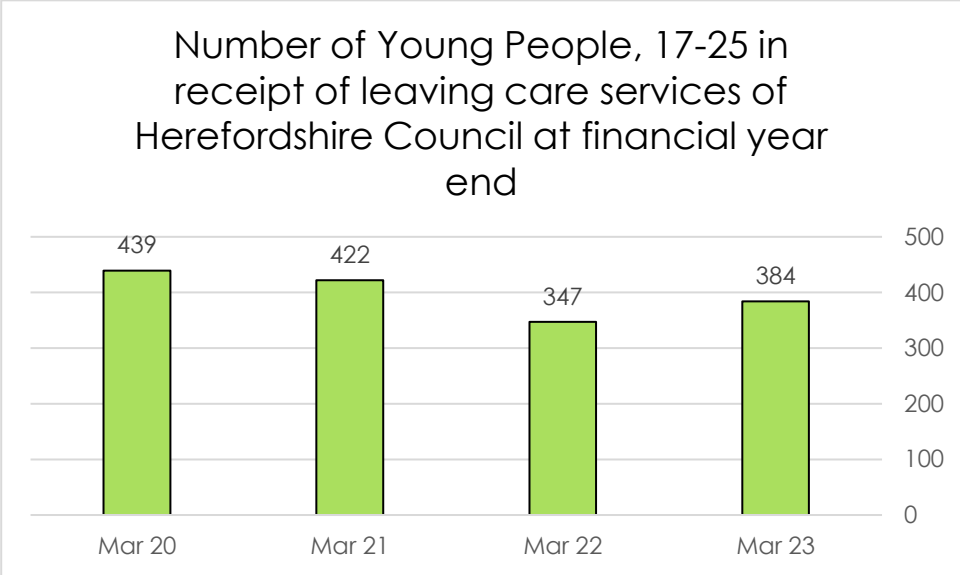
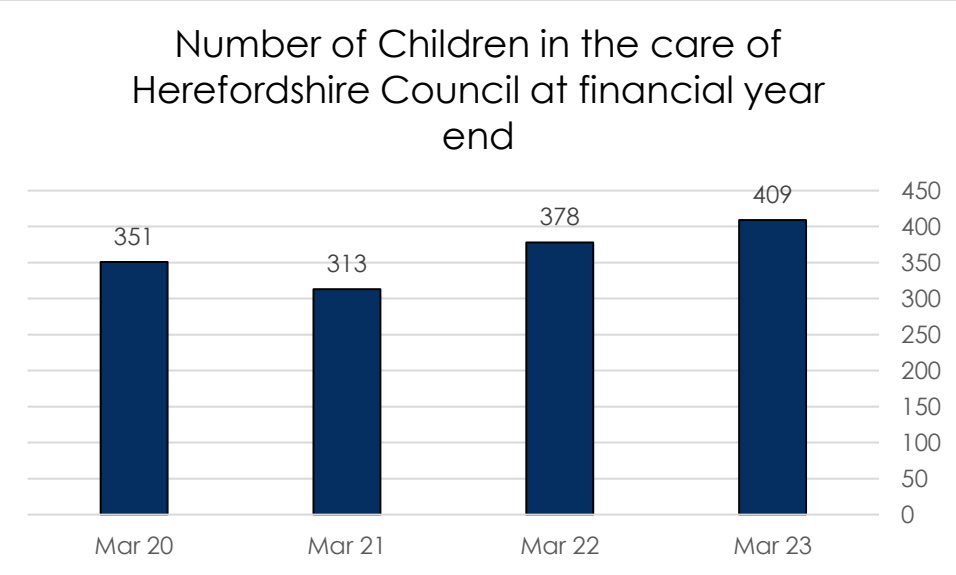
IRO's ensure care plans meet the individual needs of children and young people in care and take into account their views, interests and experiences. As the guardian of care plans, IRO's often make suggestions about what will make the plan better and can

challenge professionals if promises are not being kept. The role of IRO's is also to check regularly if plans are clear, updated and being followed-up on. They also praise and celebrate when things go well.

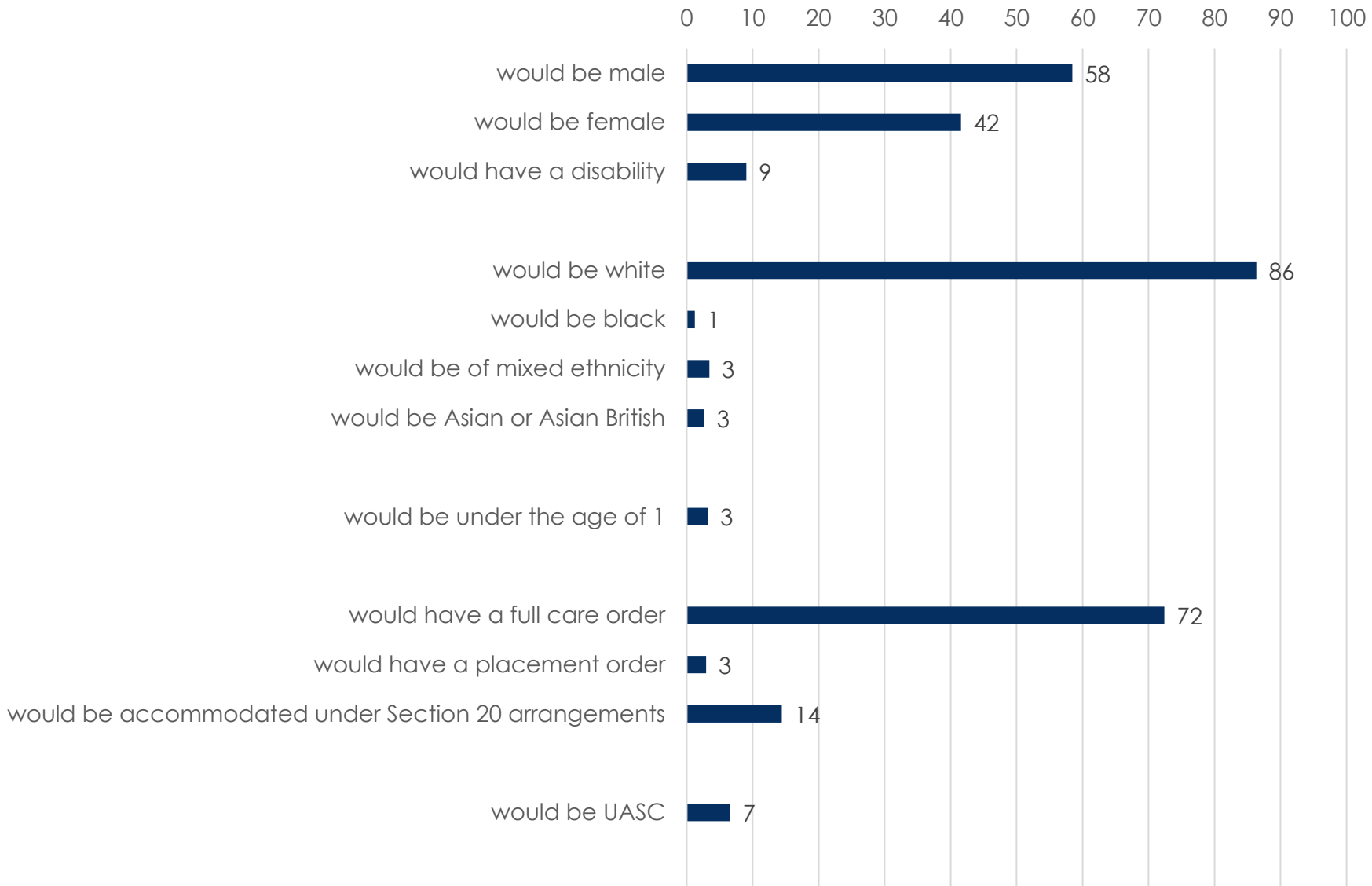


At a glance: care experience in Herefordshire

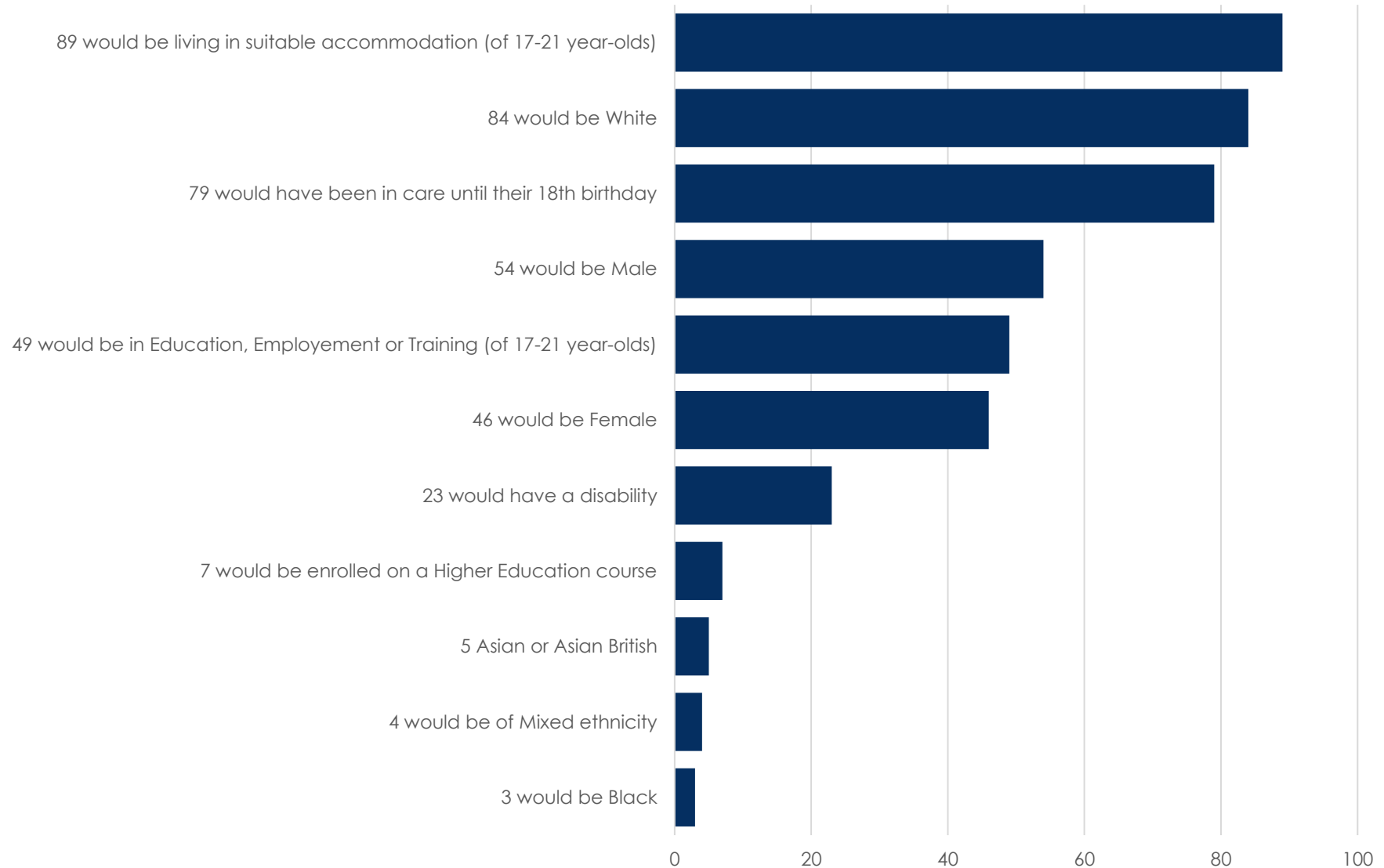
The number of children and young people in our care have risen in recent years. Between April 2021 and April 2023, there was a 30% increase. 113 children in every 10,000 under 18 year-olds in Herefordshire are now in our care.



For every 100 Children in care in Herefordshire Council



If there were 100 young people receiving leaving care services in Herefordshire



Outcomes for children and young people with care experience

By achieving the following outcomes, children and young people will be supported to thrive and get the most out of life. Each and every aspect of a child's life relies on the other parts of their life to be as good as it possibly can be. In this way, our plan for care-experienced children and young people is far greater than the sum of its parts.



Homes and housing	Health and wellbeing	Learning, developing and having fun	Relationships, identity and belonging
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support more children and young people to return and remain safely with their families 2. Enable more children and young people in care to live with families in Herefordshire 3. Develop accommodation and early support which helps young people develop their independence 4. Offer earlier and more effective support for children and young people in crisis or at risk of care entry 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote good holistic health, wellbeing and resilience 2. Improve our understanding of health and wellbeing needs among professionals, carers, and young people 3. Design and deliver services as child-centred, trauma-informed and rooted in lived experience 4. Support smooth transitions within and between services 5. Provide timely and effective support for additional health needs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be aspirational for children and young people's education and learning 2. Provide extra support for babies, children and young people with additional needs 3. Support children to remain in school by avoiding exclusions and absences 4. Make sure nurseries, schools and colleges are inclusive spaces for care-experienced pupils 5. Encourage young people to get involved in extra-curricular activities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Help children and young people understand their life story, and maintain strong connections with their birth families 2. Support children and young people to build trusted relationships and support networks with the people in their lives 3. Provide wrap-around support for care-experienced young people who are new parents 4. Respect children and young people's identity and support them to be proud of who they are
Listening, hearing and understanding	Safe and protected		Independence
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Put the voice of children and young people at the centre of all levels of decision-making 2. Provide opportunities so that young people co-produce more services and strategic plans with us 3. Let children and young people know the outcomes of decisions, what is possible to do, what is not, and why 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work together to understand risks, vulnerabilities and needs in the home, in communities and online 2. Respond together to harm, abuse and exploitation early, effectively and in child-centred and trauma-informed ways 3. Work holistically with young people to avoid criminal behaviour and activity 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare early for adulthood and independence 2. Offer financial, practical and emotional support for young people who need it in early adulthood 3. Support young people to take up further education, employment and training opportunities

Homes and housing: Children and young people have safe, stable and caring places to live and call home. What children and young people tell us:

Having stable and consistent placements means that we can call those places home and be able to spread our wings

Finding suitable places to live, where we can stay as a family unit after leaving care, means we can be truly independent and better parents ourselves

The guarantor scheme is good, but is not known about enough

Social housing can be hard to get, and private rental properties are very expensive at the moment

We would like to live close to friends, family and other things we rely on

So we will:

- Focus on finding loving, lasting and stable homes for all children and young people in care – whether that be with birth families, foster carers, adoptive families or with wider family and friends
- Provide loving, caring and nurturing homes to live in while in care, wherever possible with a family and in Herefordshire, where children and young people feel safe, comfortable and able to be themselves.
- Provide more family homes for children and young people with additional needs so they can live in homes where they have what they need to be safe, well, and cared for.
- Deliver high-quality support, care and accommodation for children and young people if they are in a crisis, with the aim of achieving a smooth, swift, and lasting return home.
- Plan and prepare early for when young people leave care and help them understand what their options are.
- Work together to find suitable housing options for young people leaving care, especially if they have a young family.
- Support young people to continue living with their foster family beyond the age of 18 if they, and their former Foster Carers, would like to. We will explore opportunities to extend this beyond the age of 21 too.
- Advertise the rent guarantor scheme more widely and make sure it is consistently applied so that as many young people as possible can benefit from it if appropriate.

How we will know we are making a difference:

- Children and young people tell us that they are feeling safer, more stable and more cared for where they are living.
- Young people tell us that, where they are living – the type of place and who they are living with - is helping them be ready to live independently as they get older.
- Children and young people are moving between homes much less.
- More children and young people are living locally in Herefordshire with Foster Carers.
- More children and young people are living in suitable houses after they leave our care.
- More young people remain living with their former foster carers after leaving care, if everyone involved wants that.

Health and wellbeing: Children and young people are emotionally, physically and mentally healthy

What children and young people tell us:

We need easier access to mental health services and emotional wellbeing support when we need it

To us, resilience is about being able to bounce forwards after something difficult happens, and maybe also about learning from our mistakes

There should be some more advice, guidance and general support to help us be physically, mentally and emotionally healthy, well and resilient

It needs to be easier to carry on getting the right support after we turn 18

Being healthy can be about your physical, emotional and mental health: they are all connected

Being healthy, to me, is about being able to function normally and do anything

Mental health and wellbeing support should take into account childhood trauma and what it's like to live in care

Mental health support during pregnancy and early parenthood is really important

Going to counselling and having therapy can be quite scary

So we will:

- Promote good health and wellbeing in all aspects of children and young people's lives.
- Give young people a health passport from their 16th birthday, which outlines their health history, including what immunisations they have had and where to access health care if they require it.
- Offer children and young people the opportunity to have an individual health review annually up to the age of 18.
- Make sure that young people turning 18, who no longer require an annual health assessment, are registered with a GP and a dentist, and have their eyesight checked regularly.
- Support young people, wherever possible, to access dental care and eye tests, if they are not entitled to free treatment.
- Advocate for improved access to health services, including dental and eye care, and mental health, that takes into account the lived experience of young people.
- Help young people, and their foster carers and PA's, understand mental health and wellbeing.
- Give children and young people time to get to know the adult working with them, so getting support is less scary.
- Write to young people, before their 18th birthday, explaining how their Children in Care Nurses can support them once they turn 18.
- Make sure mental health support continues when young people become an adult if they need it, with clear transition plans so that the right referrals can be made at the right time.
- Support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) early, so they can be healthy, well and achieve good health and education outcomes.
- Make sure education, health care plans (EHCP's) are up to date, aspirational and represent the voice of the child
- Offer wellbeing and resilience advice, guidance and support, including online and some face-to-face support. Social workers, PA's and health professionals will help young people access the right service at the right time.
- If young people are to become a parent, we will support their decisions, and help them access support for them and their baby. We want to be good 'corporate grandparents'.
- Be there if children and young people need us, as feeling and being unwell can be lonely

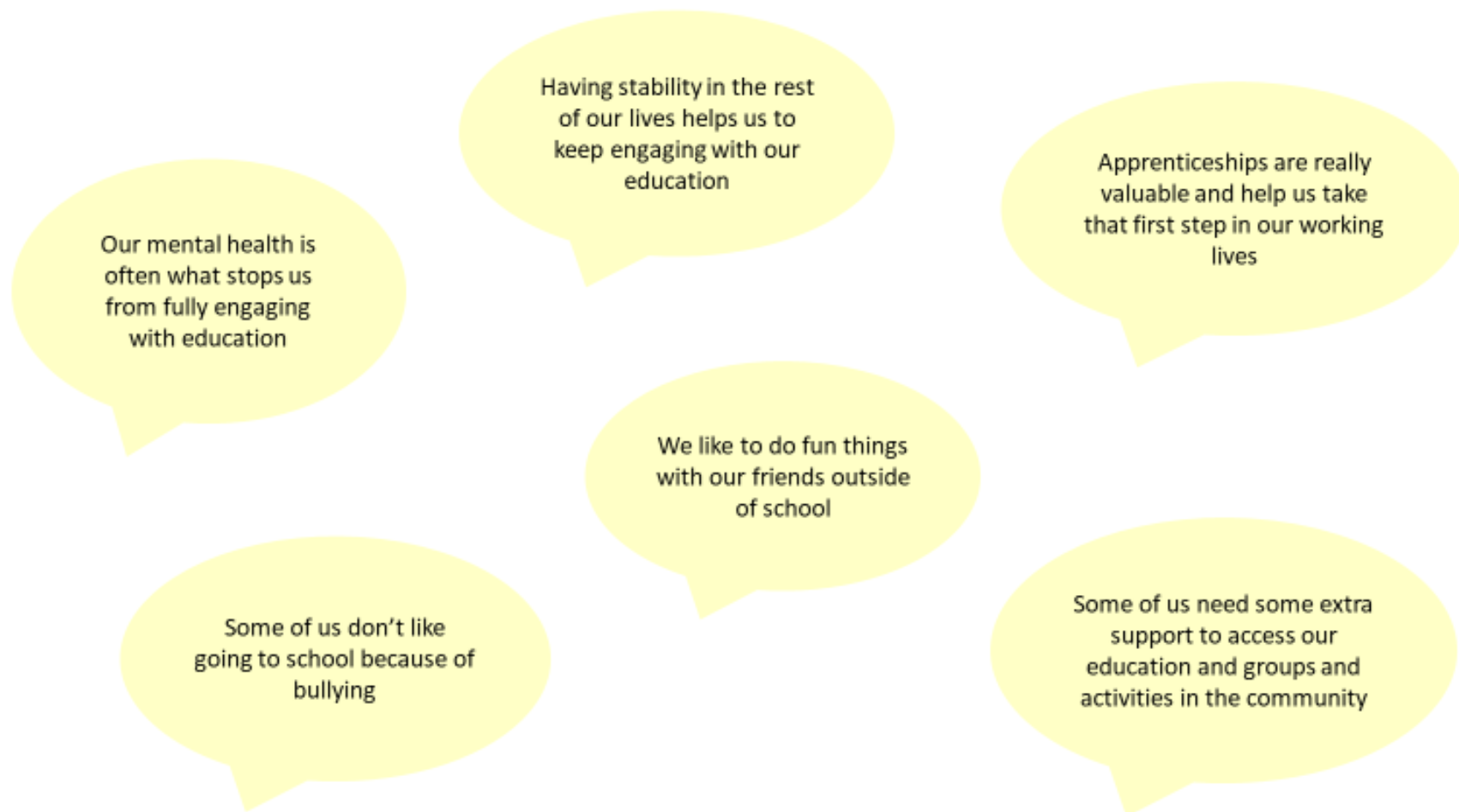
So we will:

- Make sure, wherever possible and appropriate, help and support for health and wellbeing is consistent, wherever young people are living, and that it is provided either at home, within the community or at school or college.
- Make sure that, if support is being transferred within and between health services, this will be smooth, and that young people will still get the right level of support at the right time.
- Provide young people, wherever possible, with flexibility to decide the health and wellbeing support they receive.
- Support young people to be resilient by equipping and empowering them to navigate, overcome and recover from adversity in their lives.

How we will know we are making a difference:

- Children and young people tell us that they feel more emotionally, physically and mentally healthy and well.
- Children and young people tell us that they don't feel as held back by their emotional or mental health needs and that they know what to do if they are feeling unwell.
- Children and young people tell us that they do not feel judged if they choose to have a baby and become a parent.
- Children and young people tell us that the health care and support they receive is more joined-up, consistent and is more tailored to their needs as an individual.
- Children and young people know who to turn to for support with their health and wellbeing, and that they trust that we will listen and care.
- More children and young people are registered with a GP and a dentist.
- All children and young people are fully up-to-date with all of their immunisations.
- More children and young people have health assessments which are up-to-date and on time.
- Children and young people have better emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- Fewer children and young people have severe health conditions requiring inpatient care.
- Children and young people are able to access health services in a timelier way.

Learning, developing and having fun: Children and young people have inclusive and enriching environments to learn, develop, have fun, and achieve. What children and young people tell us:



So we will:

- Be ambitious for children and young people's education and learning. This means keeping an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP), which we will develop with the young person that has their personal interests and ambitions represented throughout.
- Be aspirational for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities and support them to achieve highly through high-quality, up-to-date and ambitious Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and additional support provided by schools.
- Help children and young people feel safe, happy and well at school by working closely with schools. This includes supporting them if they are bullied, as well as working together to prevent bullying in the first place.
- Work with schools to make sure exclusions only happen as a last resort.
- Make sure children and young people have the technology they need to access any online learning.
- Support children and young people with transitions from one school to another to ensure their learning is continuous.
- Help children and young people take part in sport and leisure activities, as well as extra-curricular skills-building awards.
- Support babies and young children to grow and develop well in early life. This includes identifying and supporting any additional needs as early as possible when they first come into our care.

How we will know we are making a difference:

- Children and young people tell us that they are enjoying learning and being at school more and feel able to do the best they possibly can.
- Children and young people tell us that they have times where they can have fun and take part in activities that they want to do.
- Children and young people are changing schools less and are less likely to be excluded or be absent from school.
- Children and young people are achieving highly at school.
- Young children and babies, who are in our care, are developing well and are more likely to reach key development goals.
- Outcomes for our children and young people are the same as children who are not in care.

Relationships, identity and belonging: Children and young people build trusted relationships with the people in their lives, are able to be themselves and are free from stigma. What children and young people tell us:




So we will:

- Help children and young people know their life-story and understand why they are living in care if they would like to
- Support children and young people to build and maintain good relationships with birth and extended families, wherever possible, to make sure they have strong support networks outside of our care.
- Develop relationships with children and young people, which are built on trust and respect.
- Celebrate achievements, events and key milestones.
- Reduce the stigma that children and young people often face because they are living or have lived in care. This includes the language that we use ourselves, the actions we take, and the way that services work to support them.
- Make sure all communication is understood, especially if English is not a young person's first language and/or if they have any speech, language or communication needs.
- Make sure everyone working with children and young people has an improved understanding of gender identity and sexual orientation, so that young people feel respected, supported and empowered to be themselves.
- Take steps to make sure we have a consistent workforce so that there are fewer changes in Personal Advisors, Social Workers and other professionals. Where a change needs to happen, we will tell children and young people about this as soon as possible, and before any change happens.
- Keep in touch with children and young people, through PA's, after they leave care, if they would like this. Even if a young person moves away from Herefordshire for any reason, we will still check in with them if they would like that.
- Understand the links between young people's sense of identity and belonging, and their mental health and wellbeing and support them to love themselves.
- Help children and young people learn about healthy sex and relationships. Child in care nurses, school nurses, youth services, personal advisors and participation workers will support them with this. We will include sex and relationships in our training and induction for Foster Carers to help young people find it easier to talk to them about these things. We will also explore other options with young people, like apps where they can get support and information online.
- Join up pregnancy support services, and enhance the targeted health visiting offer, so that young people are supported during pregnancy and early parenthood.
- Make sure, as new parents, young people have opportunities to make their voice heard during pregnancy. This includes opportunities for mutual peer support with other young parents.


How we will know we are making a difference:

- Children and young people tell us that they have stronger and more trustworthy relationships with the adults in their life.
- Children and young people tell us that they have supportive friendships and healthy romantic relationships (if they are in one).
- Social Workers and Personal Advisors change much less, meaning children and young people are able to build better relationships with them over time.
- Children and young people are more likely to keep in touch with us after they leave care, so we can best help and support them if they need and want it.


Listening, hearing and understanding: Children and young people make their voice heard and shape how services are designed and delivered. What children and young people tell us:



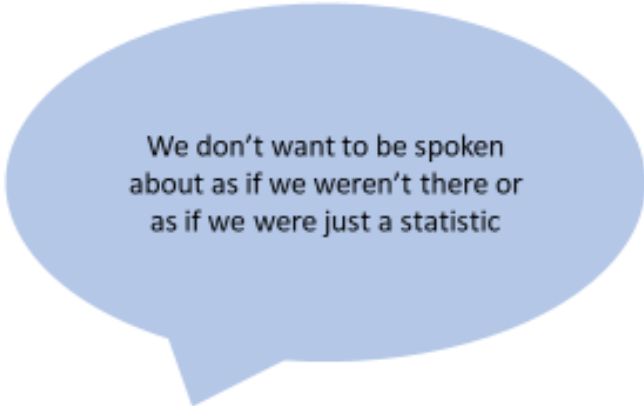
We want to make our voice heard about the things that affect us



We should be listened to whenever a decision is being made about our lives



We would like more opportunities to meet up with other care-experienced young people and support each other



We don't want to be spoken about as if we weren't there or as if we were just a statistic


So we will:

- Put the views, interests and lived experience of young people at the heart of how services are designed and delivered
- Introduce children and young people to the Participation Team when they come into our care and let them know how they can make their voice heard.
- Set up opportunities for children and young people to meet other care-experienced young people.
- Enable care-experienced young people to play an active role in staff recruitment.
- Organise opportunities for children and young people to make their voice heard directly with the people who help make the decisions.
- Be honest with children and young people about what is possible to do and what is not, and why that is.
- Support children and young people to access independent visiting and advocacy services to make sure they are fully represented in the decisions affecting their lives.
- Make sure the views, interests and lived experiences of children and young people are listened to and take into account in all individual plans and reviews.
- Proactively seek the views and experiences of children and young people who we may not hear from as much. For example, through the Youth Offending Service, Police, Youth Services and mental health services. We will make sure all services are informed and shaped by children and young people.
- Support children and young people to be active and engaged members of their community and wider society.

How we will know we are making a difference:

- Children and young people tell us that they are able to make their voice heard and feel that they have a say in the decisions which affect their life.
- What children and young people tell us about their lives and experiences in care, wherever possible, leads directly to positive changes, and we always let them know when and how that happens.
- We show that the views and interests of children and young people, are at the heart all levels of decision-making.
- We are held to account for the things that we agree we will do.

Safe and protected: Children and young people are safe and protected from harm, abuse and exploitation. What children and young people tell us:



We want to feel safe in our homes, neighbourhoods and online

So we will:

- Work together to protect children and young people from harm, abuse and exploitation, whether it happens inside or outside the home, or online.
- Make sure where children and young people live, study, work or have fun are safe and inclusive spaces.
- Support children and young people early to avoid criminal activity and risky behaviours.
- Continue to support children and young people and strive for their best outcomes unconditionally if they are in the youth or criminal justice system.
- Recognise young people 'as a young person first' in all interactions with the criminal justice system and police.
- Work restoratively with children and young people, if they come into contact with police officers and criminal justice system, making sure we build on their strengths, are child-centred, trauma-informed and have their voice at the heart.
- Work together to understand the risks and vulnerabilities that children and young people may experience in life, making sure we take every step possible to avoid them being criminalised unnecessarily.
- Communicate and work closely between different agencies, at all levels, to share intelligence, knowledge and understanding of the issues affecting children and young people. Wherever possible, we will work together as partner agencies to achieve solutions to complex and multi-faceted harms.
- Improve our skill, knowledge and confidence in identifying and responding to child sexual abuse and sexually harmful behaviour to better support children and young people.

How we will know we are making a difference:

- Children and young people tell us that they feel safer and more protected in their homes and communities.
- Children and young people are better protected from harm, abuse and exploitation.
- Children and young people are less likely to be involved in any criminal activity, either as a victim of crime or as an offender.

Independence: Young people leave care and become independent and thriving adults. What children and young people tell us:

We would like work and training opportunities to link in more with our own skills, interests and circumstances

Mental health needs and instability in the rest of our lives might be why we are struggling to access work and training opportunities

We should be made aware of what support we are entitled to when we turn 18

Apprenticeships and work experience are really valuable in helping us take the first step in our working lives

Financial and practical support is really important in helping us live independently

We would like some advice, guidance and support about managing money, including setting up bank accounts and renting

So we will:

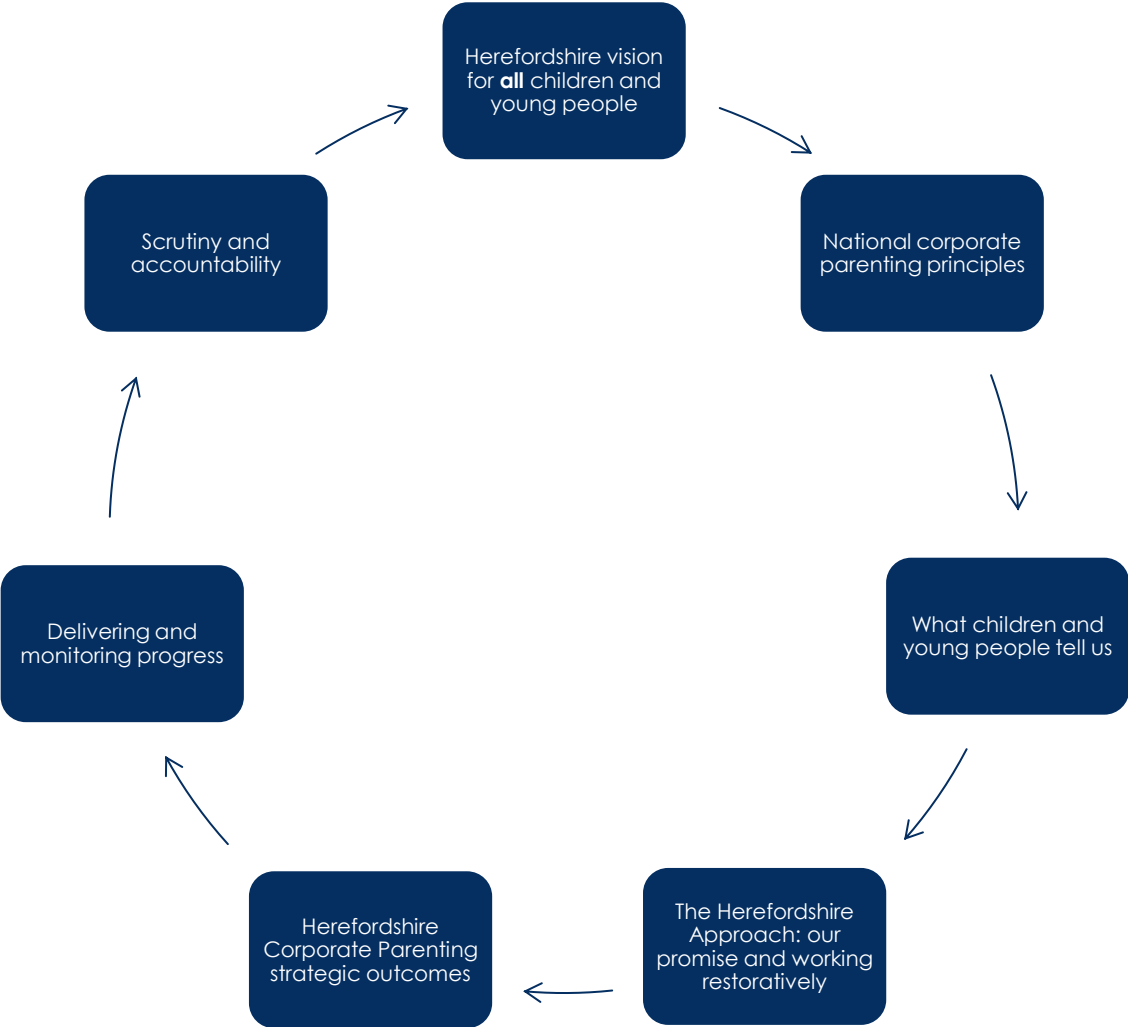
- Support young people to prepare, as early as possible, for adulthood and independence through practical, emotional and some financial support, advice and guidance.
- Enable young people to develop wider support networks, through lifelong links and family group conferencing.
- Help young people save some money regularly while they're in care to set them up for later in life.
- Help young people learn about managing money and living independently through a Tenancy-ready course.
- Support young people practically, emotionally and financially, if they are in Further or Higher Education, and link them into other forms of funding to make sure there are no barriers to being able to continue learning.
- Provide more apprenticeships, traineeships, work experience and internships, which cover a broader range of organisations and roles.
- Help young people take up education, employment and training opportunities by helping them get support for their mental health and wellbeing and overcome any logistical barriers like transport.
- Work with young people, from an early age, to build up their skills and confidence so that they are ready to take advantage of work and training opportunities.

How we will know we are making a difference:

- Children and young people tell us that they feel more able to live independently as a young adult and sort out things like budgeting, paying rent and bills, and claiming financial support.
- Children and young people tell us that their ambitions for life - like jobs, homes, families, and education - feel more achievable and that they are more motivated to reach them.
- More children and young people have an up-to-date Pathway Plan (meaning it has been reviewed with the young person in the last 6 months) after they turn 16.
- More children and young people are keeping in touch with us after leaving care.
- More children and young people are either studying, working, or on a training scheme or apprenticeship.
- More children and young people are learning to drive, so that they can be more independent in adult life.
- More children and young people are attending University.
- More children and young people benefit from lifelong links and family group conferencing approaches.

Corporate Parenting Strategy cycle

Delivering on our aims, making a difference, and improving lives



This strategy is about improving the lives of children and young people who experience care. The key to this is turning words on a page into actions and outcomes.

Putting our plans into practice

We will work together to deliver a set of strategic actions, which will be outlined in the Corporate Parenting Actions Plan and delivered through multi-agency groups.

Engagement and co-production

We will continue to engage closely with care-experienced children and young people to understand their experiences, identify where more work still needs to be done and co-develop shared solutions. They will hold us accountable to what we commit to doing.

Checking on progress

Checking on our progress is a vital part of the process. This is how we will know and understand what difference we are making. By doing this, it enables us to get to the bottom of why something might not be happening quite the way it should, allowing us to put it right. Checking on progress will require a combination of quantitative measures of service delivery and outcomes, as well as hearing the lived experience of children and young people.

Being accountable

To make sure we do what we say we will, we will be accountable to children and young people with care experience, to the public (through our elected members), and to each other.

Appendices

- 1. Summaries**
- 2. Legislative context**
- 3. Local needs**
- 4. Local strategic context**
- 5. Using Language that Cares**
- 6. Participation and engagement**
- 7. The Promise**
- 8. How we will check on progress and make a difference**
- 9. Scrutiny: Corporate Parenting guide for Councillors**

Appendix 1 - Legislative context

Legislation

- [Children Act 1989](#)
- [Children \(Leaving Care\) Act 2000](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Children and Families Act 2014](#)
- [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#)

Statutory guidance

- [Applying Corporate Parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#)

National Strategies

- [Keep on Caring: supporting young people from care to independence](#)

National reviews

- [The Independent Review of Children's Social Care \(The Case for Change\)](#)
- [National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers: Second Report](#)

International legislation

- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\) 1992](#)

Appendix 2 – Using Language that Cares

To find out more from our young people about the importance of using language that cares. We are working with young people and professionals to make sure we are communicating in the best ways.

Jargon buster

We have put together a useful guide explaining what a lot of the different words and phrases we use mean using ‘Language that cares’

Appendix 3– Participation and engagement

Our Participation and Engagement approach will set out how we will listen, hear, and understand the children and young people we care for. We want principles and approaches of participation, engagement and co-production to be a part of all that we do in Herefordshire. This means all adults, who work with care-experienced children and young people, are skilled, knowledgeable and committed to putting their voice at the heart of both individual and strategic decision-making.

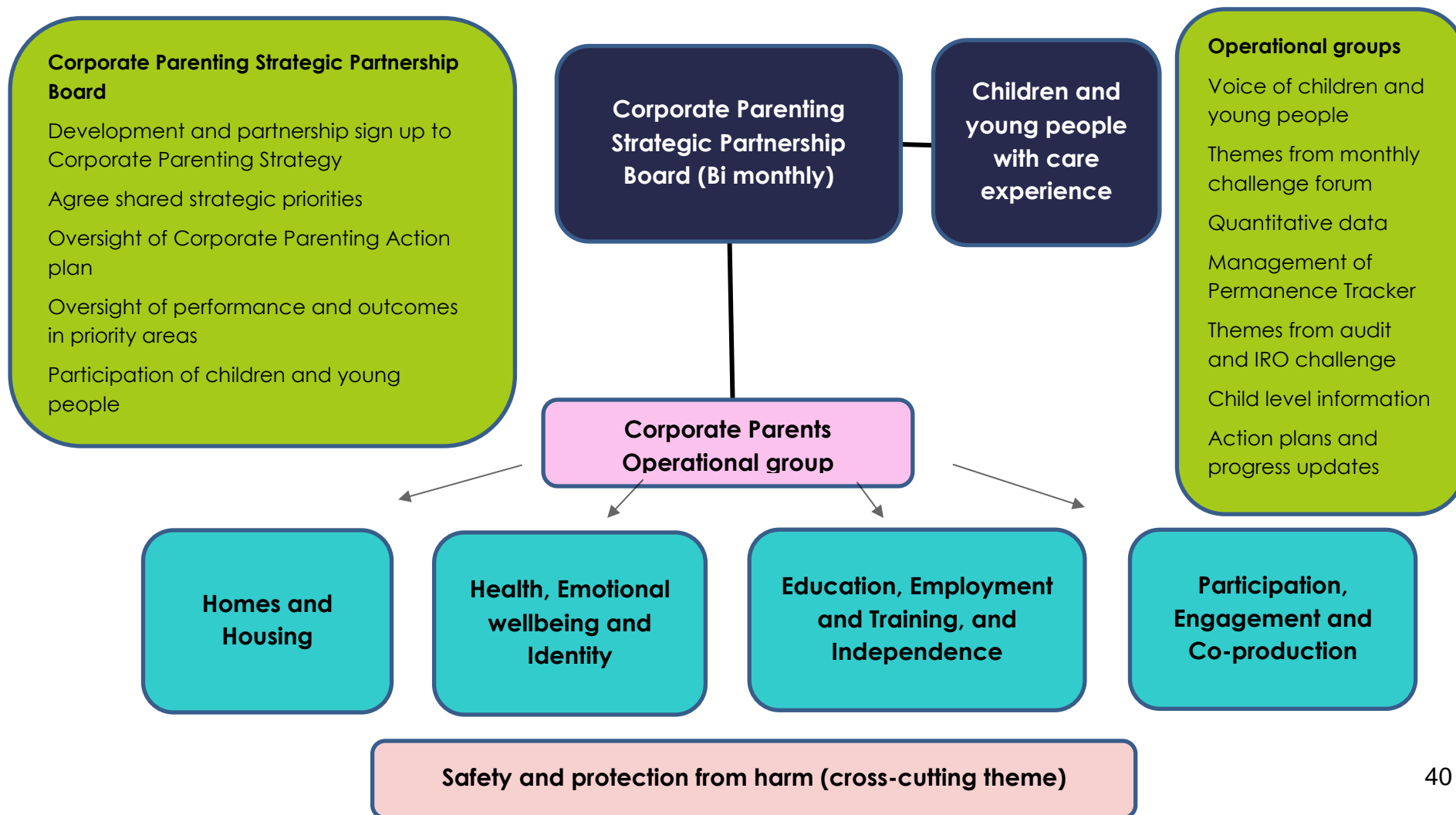
Appendix 4 – The Promise

Inform me!	Involve me!	Celebrate me!	Respect me!	Support me!
<p>We will..</p> <p>Talk to you about why you are in care and help you understand more about your family.</p> <p>Help you understand what happens when you become an adult and leave care.</p> <p>Make sure you know a person you trust who you can speak to for support.</p> <p>Let you know all you need to know.</p> <p>Speak to you in ways you understand and that are caring.</p>	<p>We will..</p> <p>Include you and listen to you in meetings.</p> <p>Use positive language if we are talking about you.</p> <p>Ask you about which possessions you want to keep and who you want to stay in touch with.</p> <p>Try to let you stay overnight at your new place, to test it out, if you need to move home.</p> <p>Try to give you choices about things, based on your views and wishes.</p> <p>Help you get your voice heard.</p> <p>Do what we say we're going to do. We won't make a promise if we can't keep it.</p> <p>Protect your confidentiality by not telling your foster carers what you tell us unless you are at risk of serious harm. If we need to tell other people, we will explain that to you.</p>	<p>We will..</p> <p>Celebrate your achievements - we will have high ambitions and aspirations for you.</p> <p>Celebrate religious festivals with you, or help you celebrate them with others.</p> <p>Celebrate your 'moving in to foster-family day' each year if you would like that.</p>	<p>We will..</p> <p>Check your bedrooms sensitively and always ask your consent. We won't intrude on your personal space and belongings.</p> <p>Not make you stand out as being in care. We will have a conversation with you to find out what you prefer.</p> <p>Treat you fairly and equally in the family so that you feel at home.</p> <p>Try to make sure that if you stay over with other people, that you know them and enjoy being with them.</p> <p>Understand what it means to be a teenager and the need to take some controlled risks in life.</p> <p>Understand and respect your identity, including your religion or beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, disabilities or health needs and ethnicity.</p> <p>Help you keep hold of your birth language and culture.</p>	<p>We will..</p> <p>Help you make happy memories.</p> <p>Support you to make friends and stay in touch with all the people who are important to you.</p> <p>Support you to build your confidence and overcome your fears.</p> <p>Support you to do your best in school – especially if you're having difficulties at school, like with bullying.</p> <p>Help you find work experience opportunities related to what you're interested in.</p> <p>Support you to have a smart phone and use it <i>safely</i> from age 11 onwards.</p> <p>Support you to have a healthy lifestyle in body and mind.</p> <p>Support you with opportunities to try new things and explore your interests, ambitions and aspirations.</p>

Appendix 5– How we will check on progress and make a difference

Governance, accountability and scrutiny arrangements

These are the groups and reporting structures through which we will deliver our strategy, be accountable to what we say we will do, and ultimately make sure we are achieving positive outcomes for care-experienced children and young people in Herefordshire.



Appendix 6 – Scrutiny

The role of Elected Members

Councillors play a fundamental role in protecting and supporting care-experienced children and young people by advocating for improved services for care-experienced young people, as well as scrutinising and challenging services to achieve optimal outcomes.

Elected members will scrutinise the delivery of our aims and principles as set out in this strategy, through the Corporate Parenting Strategic Partnership Board. Working with children and young people, to act as a ‘critical friend’, they will check on progress to make sure children and young people with care-experience are seeing improved outcomes in their lives.

Corporate Parenting guide for Councillors

The Local Government Association (LGA) has produced a resource pack for elected Members to support them to be as effective Corporate Parents as possible. The pack contains information on the relevant legislation and policy reviews, local case studies, as well as a set of key lines of enquiry.