

# Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025-2027



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## What is 'Corporate Parenting'?

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Put simply, Corporate Parenting is a whole council responsibility to be loving, caring and aspirational for all children and young people who have been in our care up to the age of 25.

There is a legal requirements for us to be Corporate Parents, Section 1 of Children and Social Work Act 2017 (Section 1) sets out seven corporate parenting principles which local authorities must have regard to for children looked after or care experienced young people.

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care was published in May 2022, this looked at the needs, experiences and outcomes of the children supported by social care and put forward recommendations for changes. Josh MacAllister listed his 5 missions for Care Experienced young people he noted that "The disadvantage faced by the care experienced community should be the civil rights issue of our time. Children in care are powerless, are often invisible and they face some of the greatest inequalities that exist in England today. In spite of these injustices so many care experienced people go on to run businesses, start families, earn doctorates, produce drama, write poetry, become government ministers and contribute to the world in countless ways. Five ambitious missions

are needed so that care experienced people secure: loving relationships; quality education; a decent home; fulfilling work and good health as the foundations for a good life. Central government and local authorities, employers, the NHS, schools, colleges and universities must step up to secure these foundations for all care experienced people. This will require a wider range of organisations to act as corporate parents for looked after children, and the UK should be the first country in the world to recognise the care experience as a protected characteristic. In December 2022, Ofsted announced the introduction of a new judgement for care experienced young people to the framework for inspecting local authority children's services (ILACS). The new judgement will focus on experiences and progress of care experienced young people. This will include consideration of whether local authorities are making good decisions for care experienced young people, and what they are doing to support them into adulthood

In February 2023 the UK government published its implementation strategy and consultation called 'Stable Homes, Built on Love'. The strategy responded to the independent review and concentrated on how to provide nurturing, stable and loving homes for children in care and care experienced young people.

Above all else, this means protecting our children and young people from harm and keeping them safe. Importantly, we must strive as we do for our own children, to want and act for them to gain the best in life, act to empower them to achieve, protect their interests and nurture their ambitions so that they feel secure and grow into independent and thriving young adults. 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.

At its heart, Corporate Parenting means always asking ourselves "would this be good enough for my child?"  
An open letter from children and young people with care experience

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.

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## **An open letter to children and young people with care experience**

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Dear children and young people who are in our care and those with care experience,

We are your Corporate Parents and our job is to ensure that we keep you safe and well, support you to be the best that you can be and get the very best out of life. We will do this by listening and hearing your voice, supporting you with your education and aspirations for the future, making sure you have a safe home. We will support you to ensure your health needs are met. We will aspire to meet the recommendations of Josh MacAlister's (December 2022) missions to gain equality for care experienced young people and that you secure: loving relationships; quality education; a decent home; fulfilling work and good health as the foundations for a good life.

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. We want you to know that the team around you from within Herefordshire County Council and across our partners will be the best Corporate Parents they can be to ensure we all

support your journey to adulthood. Together we want you to flourish and thrive.

We will know we have done what we should when you tell us you feel safe, loved and cared for in our County. That you feel accepted for who you are, as unique individuals. That you feel listened to, heard and understood and that you believe our relationship is built on trust and respect.

As senior leaders in Herefordshire 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

Tina Russell  
Corporate  
Director  
Children's  
Services,  
Herefordshire  
Council

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Councillor

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Leader,  
Herefordshire  
Council

Councillor Ivan  
Powell  
Elected member  
for  
Children's  
Services  
Herefordshire  
Council

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## **Our vision for all children and young people in Herefordshire**

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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 place. We want to inspire them, enable and support them to aim high and achieve in their lives. 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 will support them to achieve good and better 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

Over the last year, we have listened to our children and young people in Herefordshire about some of the more specific things that they would like to see improve. These have been their access to housing, their physical and mental health and wellbeing, education, relationships, making their voice heard, and gaining independence later in life.

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 want inclusivity and their diversity to be celebrated. They would like to have Corporate Parents who they can turn to and rely on to 'fight their corner', building relationships which have trust, respect and care at the centre. We will be aspirational for them and encourage them to be ambitious. 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.** We may have to have difficult conversations with you where you may not agree but we will listen and ensure that you are treated as an individual with equity, equality and respect.

“Restorative Practice” is our practice model and this focuses upon building relationships that create and inspire positive change. Creating change sometimes requires challenge as well as support. This approach can help build positive, healthy relationships, resolve difficulties and repair harm where there has been conflict. It can remove barriers, proactively promote a sense of community, engender an understanding of social responsibility and shared accountability. Working in ‘restorative’ ways helps us to get to know the children, young people and their families we support better, build on their strengths as individuals and find solutions to problems together.

### **Working together**

Corporate Parenting is a joint effort. Strategic Leaders through the Herefordshire Children’s Safeguarding Partnership have committed to work together to meet the requirements of Working Together 2023 to have a shared vision, learn from children and young

people and ensure we are ambitious about helping, supporting and protecting children and young people. Together, as Corporate Parents, we will work collaboratively and constructively to enable children and young people to engage, participate and co-produce future changes and services. Being the best possible Corporate Parents means engaging with children and young people with care experiences and finding out what works for them. The most effective decisions have children’s and young people’s lived experience at their heart. We are committed to co-production and there are a number of groups which support children and young people’s engagement and participation. This includes the new Inspire Change participation groups for care leavers, and the Voice Group.

## Children and Care Experienced Young People in Herefordshire June 2024

Children and Care Experienced Young People in Herefordshire June 2024			
85% of our children are from a White background. 15% are from Minority Ethnic Groups (Global Majority Group), an increase from the 2021 census data where Minority Ethnic Groups account for 4.5% of the U18 population.	Children in our care are more likely to have Special Educational Needs (SEN). 30.7% have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and 31.6% have SEN Support. This compares to 4.0% of pupils in all Herefordshire schools with an EHCP and 15.4% with SEN Support.	There were 412 children, including 41 UASC, in our care in March 2023. On the 1st September 24 there were 377.  30 children have been reunited with their family and their care order discharged in 23/24	Our Care Leavers Service was supporting 369 care experienced young people in March 2023 (this was 334 at March 2022, a 10.5% increase). In September 24, Care Leavers remain in touch with a contact every eight weeks In September 24, 87% of 18 years olds were in touch and 93% of 19-21

Children and Care Experienced Young People in Herefordshire June 2024			
Age groups for children in our care 0 to 4 years 15%, 5 to 9 years 17%, 41% were aged 10 to 15 and 24% were aged 16 to 17 at March 2023.	Children in our care achieved Attainment 8 scores (GCSE/Key Stage 4) above the national average of 19.1 in 2023 with a figure of 22. 1, an increase of 9.9 when compared to 12.2 in 2022. (The 8 subjects which make up Attainment 8 include English and Maths).	50% of our care leavers were in education, employment or training (EET) in March 2023, an increase from 48% in March 2022. On 1 September 24 67% of 17-18 were EET and 54% of 19-21 year olds	92% of our care leavers were in suitable accommodation in March 2023, above both the national (88%) and Statistical Neighbours rates (89.6%).



## Our strategy for our priorities for children and young people with care experience

<p><b>Homes and housing</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support more children and young people where it is safe to be with their family</li> <li>2. Enable more children and young people in care to live with families in Herefordshire</li> <li>3. Develop accommodation and early support which helps young people develop their independence</li> <li>4. Offer earlier and more effective support for children and young people in crisis or at risk of care entry</li> </ol>	<p><b>Health and wellbeing</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote good holistic health, wellbeing and resilience</li> <li>2. Improve our understanding of health and wellbeing needs among professionals, carers, and young people</li> <li>3. Design and deliver services as child-centred, trauma informed and rooted in lived experience</li> <li>4. Support smooth transitions within and between services</li> <li>5. Provide timely and effective support for additional health needs</li> </ol>
<p><b>Learning, developing and having fun</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be aspirational for children and young people's education and learning</li> <li>2. Provide extra support for babies, children and young people with additional needs</li> <li>3. Support children to remain in school by avoiding exclusions and absences</li> <li>4. Make sure nurseries, schools and colleges are inclusive spaces for care experienced pupils</li> <li>5. Encourage young people to get involved in extracurricular activities and follow their interests</li> </ol>	<p><b>Relationships, identity and belonging</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Help children and young people understand their life story, and maintain strong connections with their birth families</li> <li>2. Support children and young people to build trusted relationships and support networks with the people in their lives</li> <li>3. Provide wrap-around support for care experienced young people who are new parents</li> <li>4. Respect children and young people's identity and support them to be proud of who they are</li> </ol>

<p><b>Listening, hearing and understanding</b></p>	<p><b>Safe and protected</b></p>	<p><b>Independence</b></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Put the voice of children and young people at the centre of all levels of decision-making</li> <li>2. Provide opportunities so that young people co-produce more services and strategic plans with us</li> <li>3. Let children and young people know the outcomes of decisions, what is possible to do, what is not, and why</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work together to understand risks, vulnerabilities and needs in the home, in communities and online</li> <li>2. Respond together to harm, abuse and exploitation early, effectively and in child-centred and trauma-informed ways</li> <li>3. Work holistically with young people to avoid criminal behaviour and activity</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prepare early for adulthood and independence</li> <li>2. Offer financial, practical and emotional support for young people who need it in early adulthood</li> <li>3. Support young people to take up further education, employment and training opportunities</li> </ol>

**Homes and housing:**

**Children and young people have safe, stable and caring places to live and call home. They told us we want :**

Stable placements we can call home

Homes that gives us independence

Homes that support us to be better parents

Homes close to our friends and family

Tell us what we are entitled to





### **We have**

- Worked closely with Strategic Housing to support Care Leavers and have now gained higher priority for housing and are now Band A.
  - Ensured where challenges occur there is a clear escalation process in place which ensures resolution is swift, at the right level and barriers are challenged.
  - Supported 30 young people up to 21 who are living independently.
  - Successfully stood as guarantor for 9 young people this year.
  - Wherever possible, ensured that children live in family based settings, and we have successfully supported 26 children and young people to return to a family based setting from residential.
  - Continued to build services to support the diverse needs of our young people.
  - Ensured our home-finding and commissioning teams quality assure placements and have successfully challenged providers to improve where they have not met our standards.
  - Reviewed and updated the Individual Placement Agreement to ensure providers are held to account as to what they are expected to provide for the young person.
- Two commissioned supported living accommodations with two planned properties for single gender for 16-18 year olds.
  - Ensured that unaccompanied young people where possible, are placed together to build their UK family and relationships. We are building services to meet their cultural and diverse needs within Herefordshire.
  - Improved housing by agreeing and implementing a Care Leavers Protocol for Housing and one for 16/17 year old homeless young people.
  - Increased choice and capacity to enable more 'short breaks' for children with special needs, with two additional providers.
  - Ensured the Local Offer for Care Leavers is now on each Pathway Plan so young people are aware of their options.
  - Supported 35 young people to continue living with their foster family beyond the age of 18.

### **We will :**

- Ensure there is greater sufficiency of choice of home for young people and refresh our Sufficiency Strategy.
- Ensure greater representation of views of children and young people to shape our commissioned services, through the reformed Children in Care Council,

Youth Forum and Participation Groups and apprentices.

- Ensure more children gain permanence through Special Guardianship, adoption or child arrangement orders.
- Ensure foster carers have the right training and support to build resilience and improve placement stability.
- Increase the number of foster carer's homes by 20% and ensure we build a specialist scheme to support out children with the most complex needs to remain in family based care.
- Ensure more children and young people are placed within the boundaries of Herefordshire.
- Improve placement stability to reduce the needs for children to change their home.

### **How we will know we are making a difference:**

- Children and young people will tell us that they are feeling safe, stable and cared for.
- That the people caring for them are ambitious for them and they are supported to follow their interests, hobbies and passions.
- Young people will 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.

- Our placement stability will improve with children and young people remaining in their homes , and less placement breakdowns.
- 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 will remain living with their former foster carers after leaving care.

**Health and wellbeing: Children and young people are emotionally, physically and mentally healthy. They told us:**

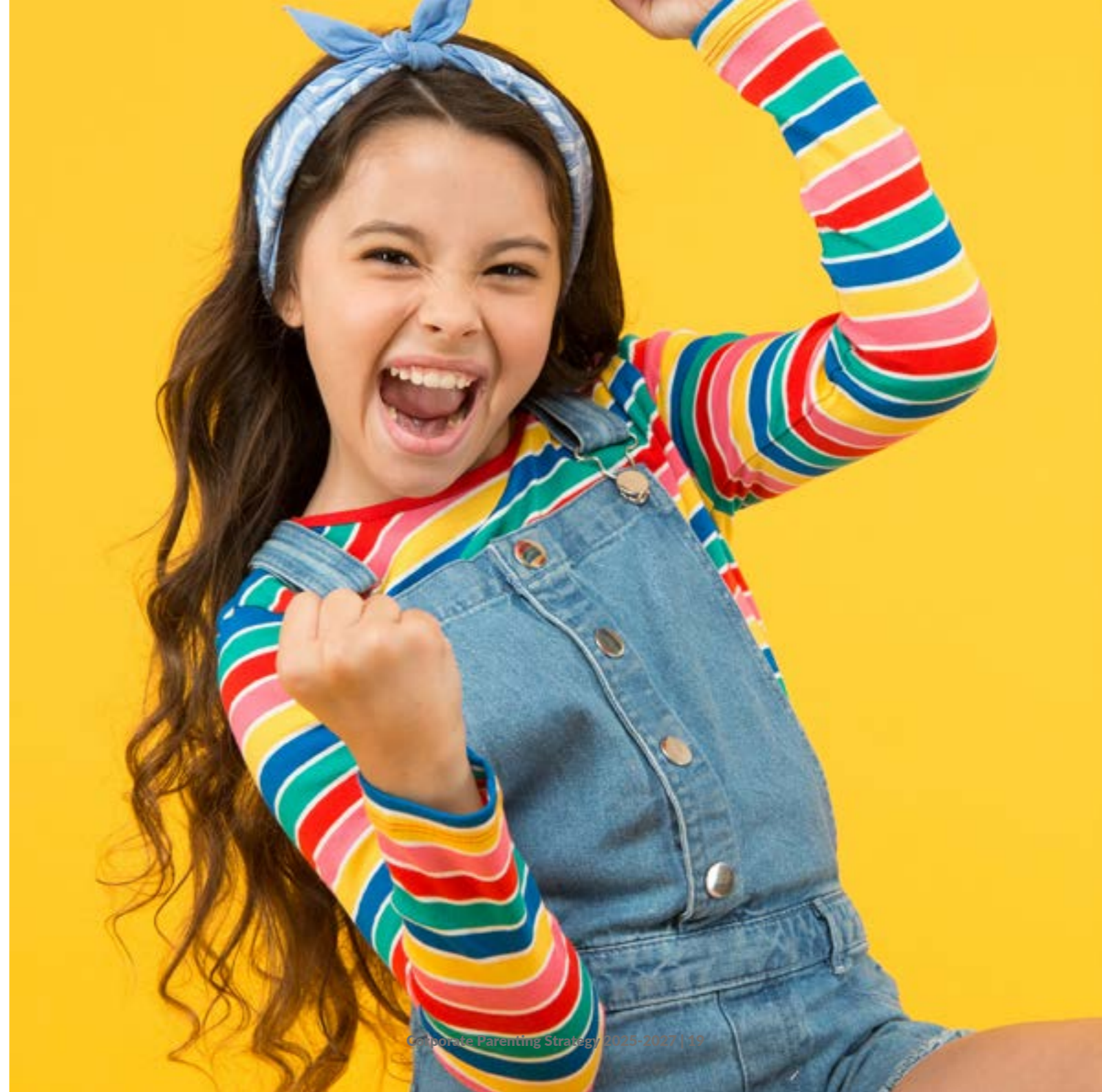
Think about our past and our future

Being Healthy can be about your physical, emotional and mental health

Mental Health Support during pregnancy and early parenting is important

Going to Counselling and having therapy can be scary

It needs to be easier to get support after 18



**We have:**

- Promoted good health and wellbeing in all aspects of children and young people's lives including health centre passes which included gym membership and swimming lessons for our children and young people.
- Given young people a health passport from their 16th birthday, which outlines their health history, and where to access health and dental care if they require it.
- Offered every child and young person the opportunity to have an individual health review annually up to the age of 18.
- Made sure that young people turning 18, who no longer require an annual health assessment, are registered with a GP have been offered a dental check and where possible are dental fit when they turn 18, and have had their eyesight checked.
- Supported young people, wherever possible, to access dental care and eye tests.
- Advocated for improved access to health services, including dental, eye care, and mental health, that takes into account the lived experience of young people.

- Helped young people, their foster carers and PA's, to understand where children and young people can gain support for their mental health and wellbeing.
- Health services have commissioned 'Lumina', a digital programme to support the mental health needs of children aged 7-12.
- Employed a psychologist to work with young people and alongside staff to support young people.
- Recommissioned our services for young people with Meadows (our new provider), who offer direct work with young people. They are supporting 21 young people.
- As of June 2024 all our education, health care plans Education and Health Care Plans are up to date.

**We will:**

- Make sure, wherever possible and appropriate, that 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- Provide a wraparound service for foster carers (through Meadows) which will launch in November 20xx to support foster carers to provide step down homes for children in residential.
- Offer our carers a range of training to meet the children's therapeutic needs, where appropriate.
- Meadows will also operate an out of hours service for carers between 5 pm and 8 am together with weekend support.
- Meadows will offer therapeutic based training to internal carers considering specialist fostering.
- Improve our reporting on health appointments to ensure all children have up-to-date health records which will provide assurance that health needs are being met.

**How we will know we are making a difference:**

- Children and young people will tell us that they feel more emotionally and physically well.
- Children and young people tell us that they know where to access support if they are feeling physically or emotionally 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 joined-up, consistent and is 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.
- All 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.
- 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. They told**

**us:**

Our Mental Health  
can affect us in school

We need extra  
support some times  
for groups and  
activities

Stability helps us  
to engage with our  
education

Apprenticeships are  
really valuable and  
help us take the first  
step for work

We like to do  
fun things with  
our friends outside  
school

Some of us don't  
like going to school  
because of bullying



### **We have:**

- Ensured all our children in care between the ages of 3 and 18 years have an allocated Virtual School Education Officer (VSEO) to support them to succeed with their education and to reach their full potential.
- Revised the Personal Education Plan (PEP) document so that pupil premium funding is closely linked to targets and evidenced based interventions to improve outcomes.
- All children and young people can contribute to the PEP document and are supported to attend their PEP meetings.
- Increased expert advice for schools through two educational psychologists working with the Virtual School to support professionals in reducing suspensions and exclusions.
- Ensured close working arrangements between the Virtual School, Inclusion Service, SEN team and Early Years SEND Inclusion Service manager to ensure early identification of SEND needs and timely completion and reviews of EHCPs.
- Appointed a lead for children with a social worker so that professionals working with children and young people on the edge of care can access education advice and support.
- Appointed a Virtual School Education Officer as a lead for post-16 transitions and commissioned a careers advisor to better support those leaving school including advice on courses and apprenticeships.
- Supported multi-agency meetings where children who are struggling to attend school are discussed and ways forward identified.
- Developed a team of mentors (STEPS team) to support individual children and young people who are experiencing barriers to education to overcome their difficulties and engage with learning.
- Joined a regional network of Virtual Schools to offer a high-quality programme of arts and sports extra-curricular activities open to children and young people placed anywhere in the West Midlands.
- Run a local programme of extra-curricular activities in the school holidays allowing opportunities to socialise with other care experienced young people, improve self-confidence and learn new skills.
- Set up a programme through the Attachment Research Community (ARC) whereby schools are funded for ARC membership and supported by the Virtual School to become trauma-informed and attachment aware in their practice to better support vulnerable children.

### **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.
- As of summer term 2024 there are 171 statutory school age children who are identified as having a special educational need; 87 with an EHCP and 84 who are registered as needing SEN support. We will 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.
- The suspension rate for Herefordshire CLA has been above national comparators for the last three years. We will work with schools to reduce the suspension rate to below national levels for CLA.
- Encourage all Herefordshire schools to join the Attachment Research Community (ARC) scheme funded by the Virtual School to improve their relational practice and reduce their reliance on punitive sanctions, including suspensions.
- 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.
- Ensure that all children have the opportunity to see a careers adviser before they leave the Virtual School at 18. Ensure all CLA children and young people have access to high quality sports and arts activities through a programme of funded opportunities throughout the year.
- Gather the views of children and young people through the PEP document to ensure they can access opportunities for extra-curricular activities that reflect their interests and strengths.
- 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.
- Consulting with young voices about how to progress sensitive conversations about staying put arrangements.

**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 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. They told us:**

Changing placements and workers makes it hard to trust and get to know them

Good to get advice and support on healthy sex and relationships can be difficult to talk to foster carers

Staying with our carers after 18 is good

We can feel singled out as a child in care

Some of us want to know who our birth families are and see them on our own terms

We want to be able to contact our PA when we really need to



**We have :**

- Helped some children and young people know their life-story and understand why they are living in care. We have ensured there are full resources to support this work.
- Supported 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. We have successfully discharged 30 care orders and have 26 children placed with parents.
- Celebrated achievements, events and key milestones. This was evidenced by the Celebration event in August 24.
- We are implementing “Language that cares”.
- If English is not a young person’s first language, we have worked with interpreters and ensured that their documentation is translated into their language.
- All Personal Advisors are permanent to support consistency and stability of relationships.
- Kept in touch with children and young people, through PA’s, after they leave care, if they would like this. We remain in touch with 93% of Care leavers aged up to 21.

**We will:**

- Follow the recommendations of the Cass Report.
- Train workers across our teams to undertake life story work over the next 12 months.
- Expand the network of support to care leavers by assisting them to develop and maintain key relationships, such as corporate parenting ambassadors and re-linking with key people from a young people’s journey.
- Ensure they can follow their faith and connect with others who speak their language.
- Ensure , where possible children and young people have placements with a similar ethnic background
- Offer a range of groups to support young people to develop friendships, interests and sense of belonging.
- Progress language guides to ensure that young people understand and are given an opportunity to be fully involved in the decisions in their lives.
- 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 supporting 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 will 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. They told 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  
want 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 a  
statistic



### **We have**

- Introduced 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.
- Ensured all children and young people are aware of advocacy.
- Set up opportunities for children and young people to meet other care experienced young people.
- Enabled care experienced young people to play an active role in staff recruitment by participating in a panel interview
- Organised opportunities for children and young people to make their voice heard directly with the people who help make the decisions. They have met with key senior leaders.
- Advised through participation with children and young people about what is possible to do and what is not, and why that is.
- Make sure the views, interests and lived experiences of children and young people are listened to and taken into account in all individual plans and reviews.
- Proactively sought 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.

### **We Will**

- Put the views, interests and lived experience of young people at the heart of how our support services are designed and delivered.
- Be seeking regular feedback from care experienced young people on the service they receive.
- Make sure every child, where appropriate who becomes looked after is contacted by a member of the participation service to tell them what support is on offer to them as a looked after child.
- Ensure more children contribute to their child protection conferences.
- Increase the number of children who chair their looked after reviews.
- Widen the representation of young people who are part of the children in care council (Inspire Change).

### **How we will know we are making a difference:**

- Children and young people tell us that their voice is 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 can evidence 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. They told us:**

We want to feel safe in our neighbourhoods

We want to know our choices

We want to keep in touch with our friends and family, don't ask us the same things lots of different times

We want to feel safe at home and on line



**We have:**

- Implemented Get Safe a multi-agency Exploitation Pathway, across our partnership.
- A dedicated team to do individual work where children have missing episodes or need support where there are concerns about exploitation.
- Continued to support children and young people in the youth or criminal justice system, and strive for their best outcomes unconditionally.
- Ensured that young people have had the opportunity to feed back to police with an open forum established.
- Worked together to understand the risks and vulnerabilities that children and young people may experience in life through mapping and joint disruption to support groups of young people.
- Communicated and worked closely between different agencies, at all levels, to share intelligence, knowledge and understanding of the issues affecting children and young people.
- Strengthened our response to Community Safety through the Local Multi Agency Child Exploitation Forums to prevent and disrupt exploitation
- Improved our skill, knowledge and confidence in identifying and responding to child sexual abuse and sexually harmful behaviour to better support children and young people.

**We will**

- Expand our Multi Agency Get Safe Pathway for young people aged up to 25.
- Review the pathway with children and young people to understand any changes that may be needed.
- Continue to review our services to ensure they meet any changing needs or threats.
- Make sure that children are asked routinely about their views on their safety.

**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. They told us:**

We want to live in safe neighbourhoods and be independent

We want to have enough money

We want chances to fail and for you to stay with us



We have :

- Reviewed 'the care leavers offer' and strengthened the finance support available to children and young people.
- We give young people opportunities to return to more supportive home arrangements, if living with greater independence has been too difficult or risky.
- We have continued to support and advocate for our young people where their choices have meant they may not be able to gain accommodation easily
- Reduced the number of young people who experience eviction.
- We have employed a specialist housing PA to improve knowledge around maintaining a tenancy and prevent homelessness.

**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 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 achievable and that they are 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.
- We will work together to deliver a set of strategic actions, which will be outlined in the Corporate Parenting Action 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.

## 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. We will report to the Corporate Parenting Board.

## 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.

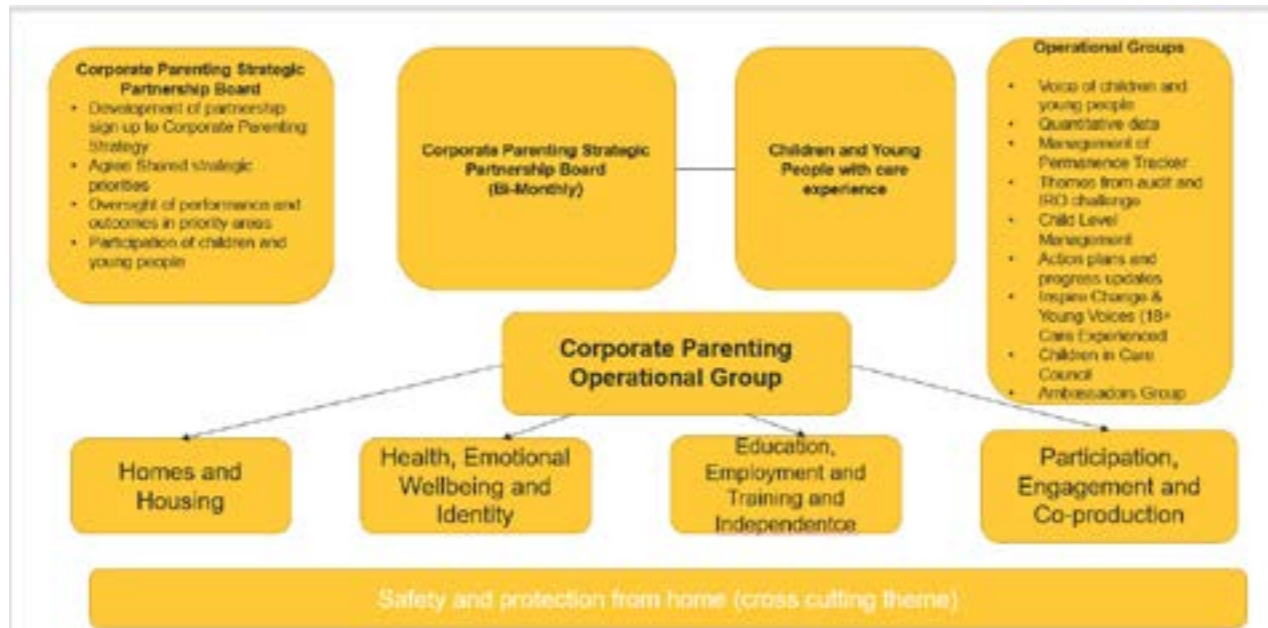
## Appendix 3 - The Promise

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 safely 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 4 - How we will check on progress

### How we will check on progress and make a difference

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 5 - 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 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.



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**[www.herefordshire.gov.uk](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk)**

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