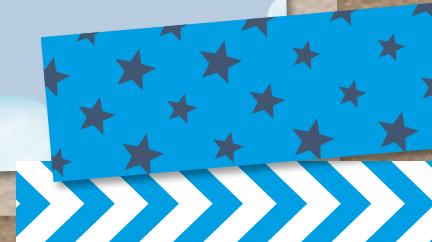




Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

THE SKY'S the LIMIT

Gloucestershire's Corporate Parenting Strategy



2025/2028



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OPENING STATEMENTS

hello!

FROM OUR AMBASSADORS

There are 15 of us aged between 16 and 25 who work with the county council as Ambassadors. We have all experienced support from Children's Social Care, and with this first-hand knowledge we give our time to help improve care services in Gloucestershire. Between us we bring expertise of being children in care, care leavers, having disabilities, young people in the youth justice system, and of children's mental health. As well as using our own experience, we also engage with other children and young people to get their insight and learn from them. Using this knowledge we help to make sure that services for young people are guided by the views of young people.

BEING A CORPORATE PARENT

Councillor Paul McLain
(Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding)

Councillor Philip Robinson
(Cabinet Member for Education and Bus Transport)

Pete Bungard
(Chief Executive Officer)

Ann James
(Executive Director of Children's Services)



The term 'corporate parent' means that the council has stepped in to fulfil the role of a parent, often alongside birth parents and family members. In Gloucestershire, we focus more on the word 'parent' and less on the word 'corporate' and are proud to provide this role to around 1200 children in and leaving our care each year. We are committed to being good parents and will remove barriers that stop our children and young people from thriving. We will work tirelessly to build relationships across the county, with businesses, schools, police, health, district councils, the voluntary community sector and, most importantly, children, young people, and their families. By doing this we will ensure we work to provide all of the support that our children and young people deserve.

The happiness and welfare of Gloucestershire's children and young people is important to us. There is no greater responsibility for the council than ensuring it is the best parent it can be to those growing up in and leaving our care.



We want to say a big thank you to the children and young people who helped develop this strategy. They set out what good care should look like and what they need from us as their corporate parents.

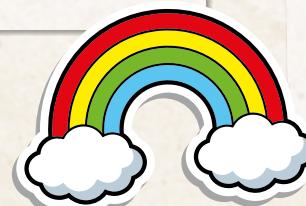
INTRODUCTION

In Gloucestershire, we want the best for all children and young people. We believe that everyone deserves to thrive and live happy, fulfilled lives of choice and opportunity. As a county council we have a particular responsibility to those children in our care, and those who have moved on from our care. We are determined to support our children and young people every step of the way. We promise that we will do all we can to help them achieve. This strategy sets out how we will deliver on this promise.



In the summer of 2023, councillors, partners, foster carers, children, and young people came together to discuss our priorities for children in care and care leavers. We looked at what we were already achieving together and challenged ourselves to go further. We identified how we can ensure that every young person receives the love, care and support they need to thrive, and identified the barriers we need to remove to achieve this.

Our councillors, particularly those that sit on our corporate parenting group, have led the way. They have pledged that the group will become a dynamic, problem-solving forum. Each councillor has adopted one of the corporate parenting priorities set out in this strategy and will champion its delivery.



The council has already committed to the following:

- 1 Care experience will be treated as a protected characteristic, ensuring it provides all the support that accompanies this status.
- 2 Each councillor will take action to support and promote fostering in the county, making sure foster carers get the recognition they deserve for the incredible contribution they make to our community.
- 3 That every child and young person will be supported to access the education, training, and employment opportunities they need to thrive as active and fulfilled members of their communities.

This strategy also sets out the six priorities that have been co-produced with children, young people, foster carers, and partners. Much is already underway, and we will set out what's been achieved so far, as well as what more we will do.



What our children and young people say...

AS YOUNG PEOPLE with EXPERIENCE OF CARE, WE NEED OUR CORPORATE PARENTS to...

Help us to have strong and caring relationships. They should get to know us and support us throughout our care journey.

Listen to what we say and understand our feelings when making decisions about our lives.

Help us at the right time, when we need it. Help us with the more complicated steps in life, such as housing. Help us to navigate this with clear, consistent, and helpful information, and make sure good quality housing is always available to us.

No matter what our experience is, we should have equal opportunities to make the best of our future!

Look after our mental health support needs.

Champion the needs of children in care and care leavers and drive improved outcomes.

Raise awareness of what it means to be care experienced, celebrate our successes, champion us in your roles and help us remove the stigma of growing up in care.

Challenge decisions that have a negative impact on children in care and care leavers.



OUR Corporate PARENTING PLEDGE

THE CORPORATE PARENTING PRINCIPLES^{1,2}



In order to thrive, children and young people have certain key needs that good parents generally meet. The Corporate Parenting Principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:

To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of children and young people in and leaving our care

To encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings

To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people

To help children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners

To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people

For children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work

To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.



1. Children and Social Work Act 2017

2. Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers

These principles do not exist in a vacuum. They must shape the mindset and culture of every part of a local authority in how it carries out all of its functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers.

All Gloucestershire County councillors are corporate parents. They take their responsibilities seriously and commit to upholding these principles, acting in the best interests of children in care and care leavers just as they would for their own children. They also aspire to:

1. Champion the needs of children in care and care leavers
2. Remove barriers, open doors, and drive improved outcomes
3. Challenge council decisions that may have a negative impact on children in care and care leavers
4. Encourage partners and businesses to act as 'extended family,' by offering opportunities, removing barriers, and championing our children and young people.

THE COUNCIL WILL SUPPORT MEMBERS IN FULFILLING THEIR ROLE BY:

Ensuring members are equipped with the knowledge and information about the corporate parenting work of the council.

Providing members with training opportunities to assist in the development of their role.

Hosting events, facilitated by our care experienced Ambassadors and Voice Gloucestershire (our Children in Care Council) who can inform, support and challenge.

Inviting members to attend events and celebrate children and young people's achievements.



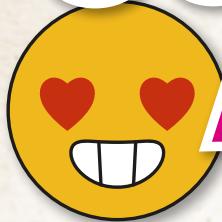
NAME *Paul McLain*

Signature *Paul McLain*

NAME *Phil Robinson*

Signature *Phil Robinson*

OUR APPROACH



We will do everything we can to support children to grow up with their parents. When this is not possible, we will support them to be cared for by those who already know and care about them. To do this, we will provide high quality prevention and family support services to give families every opportunity to stay together. For those who do need our care, we will prioritise keeping them within the county, helping children stay at their school and in touch with family and friends.

Our Practice Framework³ sets out the way we will work with children and families and a number of other important plans set out how we will achieve our aims, including Gloucestershire's:

1 One Plan for All Children and Young People

2 Early Help Strategy

3

3

Sufficiency Strategy, Home@TheHeart

4

SEND and Inclusion Strategies

We will bring young people's views and voices to life by keeping them at the centre of their plans and including them in service developments. Our role is to ensure their voice is heard and that developments are co-produced.

By supporting this strategy, and agreeing common goals, we can help each other to be the best possible corporate family. Building on the work already taking place across Gloucestershire, we will drive real change whilst learning and growing together.



3. Resource Library – practice framework

OUR PRIORITIES

1

YOUR VOICE COUNTS

Children and young people will be involved in decisions that affect them and will be invited to co-produce important service developments.



2

STAYING CONNECTED

Making sure children and young people in care are loved, cared for, and supported to stay in touch with the people who are important to them.

3

STAYING HEALTHY AND WELL

Ensuring children's mental and physical health and wellbeing are looked after, with guidance and help to make healthy choices and pursue an active, positive lifestyle.



4

STABLE LOVING HOMES

Encourage families to foster and give the opportunity to grow up in a loving home where children and young people feel they belong and can stay until ready to leave. When ready to move on, we'll make sure there's suitable and safe housing options available.



5

STAYING SAFE

Keeping children safe from danger, whether that be at home, at school, in the community, online or elsewhere and helping children recover from past harm. Supporting children and young people to explore the world around them and learn about appropriate risk-taking as they grow up.



6

ACHIEVING YOUR POTENTIAL

Believing in every child and young person's unique abilities by ensuring a great education and providing opportunities to achieve their potential and make the most of their skills.



CHILDREN in CARE

Mar- 24

Number of Children who entered care in 2023/24

294



NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CARE

842

RATE PER 10,000

65.4

SEEKING ASYLUM

60 7%

HAVE A DISABILITY

71 8%

HAVE AN UP-TO-DATE HEALTH ASSESSMENT

92%

HAVE AN UP-TO-DATE DENTAL CHECK

86%

Age

| | Under 1 | 1 - 4 | 5 - 9 | 10 - 15 | 16+ |
|------------|---------|-------|-------|---------|-----|
| Number | 44 | 104 | 163 | 298 | 233 |
| Percentage | 5% | 12% | 19% | 35% | 28% |

Children living outside of Gloucestershire

225 27%

Ethnicity

| White | Mixed | Black or Black British | Asian or Asian British | Other Ethnic group | Information not yet obtained |
|-------|-------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 651 | 99 | 43 | 34 | 14 | <5 |
| 77% | 12% | 5% | 4% | 2% | - |

Living more than 20 miles from home

242 28%

Current CiC population - Age when they entered care

| | Under 1 | 1 - 4 | 5 - 9 | 10 - 15 | 16+ |
|------------|---------|-------|-------|---------|-----|
| Number | 95 | 159 | 261 | 263 | 64 |
| Percentage | 11% | 19% | 31% | 31% | 8% |



Gender

| | Males | Females | Indeterminate |
|------------|-------|---------|---------------|
| Number | 475 | 366 | <5 |
| Percentage | 56% | 43% | - |

Where our children live

| | IFA | GCC Foster Care | Residential | Semi Independent/Independent living | Placed for Adoption | Placed with Parents | Relatives and Friends | Other |
|------------|-----|-----------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Number | 163 | 287 | 92 | 90 | 42 | 39 | 111 | 18 |
| Percentage | 19% | 34% | 11% | 11% | 5% | 5% | 13% | 2% |

Reason for care

| | Number | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|--------|------------|
| Abuse or neglect | 585 | 69% |
| Child's Disability | 12 | 1% |
| Parental illness or disability | 5 | 1% |
| Family in acute stress | 68 | 8% |
| Family dysfunction | 88 | 10% |
| Socially Unacceptable Behaviour | 7 | 1% |
| Absent Parenting | 13 | 2% |
| Absent Parenting UASC only | 51 | 6% |
| Cases other than Children in Need | 6 | 1% |
| This is not a child in need | <5 | - |

Legal Status of children in care

| | Number | Percentage |
|---|--------|------------|
| Full Care Order | 479 | 57% |
| Full Care Order & Placement Order granted | 89 | 11% |
| Interim Care Order | 127 | 15% |
| Single period of accommodation under section 20 | 144 | 17% |
| On remand, or committed for trial or sentence, and accommodated by LA | <5 | - |

CARE LEAVERS

Mar- 24

Gender

| | Males | Females | Indeterminate |
|------------|-------|---------|---------------|
| Number | 231 | 212 | <5 |
| Percentage | 61% | 39% | - |

NUMBER OF CARE LEAVERS

547

ASYLUM SEEKERS

88

HAVE A DISABILITY

16% **65** **12%**



Ethnicity

| | White | Mixed | Asian / Asian British | Black or Black British | Chinese | Any other ethnic group | Information not yet obtained |
|------------|-------|-------|-----------------------|------------------------|---------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Number | 400 | 47 | 32 | 37 | <5 | 29 | <5 |
| Percentage | 73% | 9% | 6% | 7% | - | 5% | - |

LIVING IN SUITABLE ACCOMMODATION

90.9%



Age

| | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
|------------|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|
| Number | <5 | 8 | 124 | 133 | 123 | 85 | 41 | 19 | 10 |
| Percentage | - | 1% | 23% | 24% | 23% | 16% | 8% | 3% | 2% |

| | Number | Percentage |
|--|--------|------------|
| Independent Living | 176 | 32% |
| Living with Former Foster Carers | 40 | 7% |
| Semi-independent, transitional accommodation | 142 | 26% |
| Engaged in Education, Employment or Training | - | 55.4% |
| Keep in touch | - | 90% |

YOUR VOICE COUNTS



WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED?

1. Created the Children in Care and Care Leaver Forums to enable us to listen, co produce our policies and improve our practice.
2. Continued as a long-standing and active member of the National Care Leavers' Benchmarking Forum.
3. Revised our service structure so that children in care can keep the same social worker throughout their time in care.
4. Established a leaving care service and allocate a leaving care personal adviser to work alongside each child in care social worker from the age of 16.
5. Commissioned the Coram Bright Spots Survey⁴ and developed a 'you said, we are doing' plan, ensuring we act on what children and young people tell us is important.
6. Embedded 'Language that Cares' to ensure we use every day, child-friendly language in all our records and ways we practice^{5,6}.
7. Use Mind of My Own⁷ to enable children and young people to choose who and how they want to communicate with practitioners and managers.
8. Developed easy to read plans.

1

9. Implemented Ambassador mentors for senior leaders, ensuring communication and challenge at the highest level of decision making.
10. Instated 'voice and participation champions' in every team, linked with Ambassadors, their role is to promote voice and co-production.
11. Launched our new **Corporate Parenting Pledge** setting out our commitment to children in care and care leavers.
12. Recommissioned translation and interpreting services so that every child or young person who needs one, can have one. This means that children and young people who are learning English as an additional language can be better understood, and their views acted upon.

4. About the Bright Spots Programme - Coram Voice

5. Our Ambassadors make sure children's voices are heard | Gloucestershire County Council

6. Ambassadors' 'Language that Cares' Campaign wins National Award! | Gloucestershire County Council

7. Home - Mind Of My Own Mind Of My Own

YOUR VOICE COUNTS

WHAT MORE WILL WE DO?



1. Always capture and listen to children and young people's feedback, making sure an advocate is available when needed.
2. Involve children and young people in service developments and plans, using Language that Cares and working with Ambassadors to train all colleagues and corporate parents.
3. Ensure we work with children and young people to understand why they are in our care and make sure that we capture their experiences and memories whilst in care, and as young adults through our 'Every Story Matters' programme.
4. Develop a simple way to gather and analyse the feedback children and young people give us at their reviews, personal education planning meetings, health reviews, care and pathway plans and act on emerging themes and key messages.
5. Continue to invest in our children and young people through our award-winning Ambassador programme and support the delivery of the priorities set by children and young people each year.
6. Make sure we listen to children and young people about who is important to them and make sure they can stay in touch with and see those people most important to them.
7. Deliver an annual voice and participation event led by Ambassadors.
8. Develop a care experienced 'young commissioner' role – an apprenticeship that will help put young people's views at the heart of commissioning, quality assurance and contract monitoring.
9. Undertake the Bright Spots survey on an annual basis, alternating between children in care and care leavers, presenting findings to corporate parenting group, producing a 'you said, we are doing' document and taking action to deliver on the priorities it identifies.
10. Work with children and young people living out of county, and those whose voices are seldom heard, to listen, amplify their views and act on what they tell us.
11. Make sure children and young people have an easy-to-read copy of their plan.



STAYING CONNECTED

WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED?

1. Improved our family time offer, supporting children and young people to stay in touch with their family and when things change, our reunification scheme provides additional support to help families to reunite.
2. Created a dedicated care leaver service and improved the timeliness of allocating Personal Advisers so young people can build long-lasting relationships with those caring for and supporting them. Handovers from social workers to personal advisers take place over time, meaning children and young people have time to get to know their personal adviser, supported by carers and social worker.
3. Worked with local children's homes providers to create more capacity in Gloucestershire and reduce the number of children in care and care experienced adults that have to move out of county. This means that more of our children and young people can stay connected to friends, family, school, community, and the things that are important to them.
4. Improved our offer to kinship (family) and connected people carers so that more of our children grow up with someone they know and trust if they cannot grow up with their parents.



2

5. Reviewed and improved our Staying Put Scheme, designed to support more children to stay with their carer beyond the age of 18, until ready to leave.
6. Gained Staying Close funding to deliver a team to work closely with young people as they move on from children's homes and supported accommodation to build a network of trusted adults and relationships that don't end just because a young person moves. This helps us better support young people's transitions and developing independence.
7. A free leisure and sport offer for care leavers delivered in partnership with some of our district councils that provides free access to care leavers and to a friend in their local area.
8. Delivered a weekly drop-in at various sites across the county, including one specifically for asylum seeking children and young people we care for.
9. Launched the southwest Graduating Care App, a telephone app for care leavers, which provides easy access to each local authority's care leaver offer and ensure that those living out of area know the offer that's available to them and how to access it.



STAYING CONNECTED

WHAT MORE WILL WE DO?

1. Work with children, young people, and families to understand what family time should look like for each child, making sure we are creative and offer things to do in places children and families can feel comfortable.
2. Develop life-long links and offer a lifetime connection to all care experienced adults, should they need us after the age of 25.
3. Make sure our children in care know and understand our offer to care leavers, including our offer to those aged over 21 years.
4. Work with district and borough councils to expand the sport and leisure opportunities and transport offers across the county.
5. Provide more ways for children and young people to meet up with other children in care and care leavers if they wish.
6. For those young people that become parents, we will be alongside them every step of the way, acting as great parents and grandparents. Our corporate grandparent offer is clear and set out in our **Care Leaver Local Offer**.
7. Increase local authority foster care capacity by developing a programme that enables carers to adapt their home so that more brothers and sisters can live together, and more of our children can stay with local foster carers when they want to.
8. Open our own children's homes and supported accommodation to enable children and young people to live locally and stay connected to their family and communities.
9. Work with partners, such as Gloucestershire Action for Refugee and Asylum Seekers (GARAS), to ensure there are opportunities for unaccompanied and asylum-seeking children and young people to come together, make friends, and have fun.



STAYING HEALTHY AND WELL

WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED?

1. Our new Young Adults service provides emotional and mental health support to 16 to 25-year-old care leavers, is delivered by a collaboration between Young Gloucestershire and the CAMHS service (Child and Adolescents mental Health Service).
2. Free prescriptions and dental care for all children in care and care leavers.
3. Support with the cost of eye tests and glasses.
4. Created specialist health teams to provide easy access to the right health support for children in care and care leavers at the time it's needed.
5. Youth support health teams provide sexual health support and training as well as access to mental health, physical health, and speech and language therapists.
6. Good use of the Strength and Difficulties questionnaire to identify and respond to any health and support needs at the earliest opportunity.
7. Delivered an Independent Living Skills programme that supports children and young people to develop the skills for adult life.
8. Work with GPs and other health services to ensure they understand what it means to be care experienced and to help them offer the best care they can.



9. Health Passports are in place for every child in care. These documents were co-designed with care leavers and are given to children from age 11 onwards. They contain key health information (birth information, immunisation record, allergies, medical history), and can be used as part of Life Story (Every Story Matters) work.

3

WHAT MORE WILL WE DO?

1. Support recovery, resilience and good mental health by training foster carers and colleagues in trauma informed practice.
2. Continue to work with our health services to enable access to mental health support when it's needed.
3. Extend the support offered by the Children in Care nursing team beyond 18 years for care leavers.
4. Ensure unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people are offered any enhanced health screening and care they need.
5. Review and continue to improve transition to adult services for children and young people who need it.
6. Building on a countywide sport and leisure offer, we will ensure every child or young person is supported to take part in a hobby or regular activity of their choosing.
7. Deliver healthy living programmes and introduce the use of personal budgets to support self-care and good mental health for care leavers.
8. Ensure that care experienced parents have access to an enhanced midwifery and a best start in life offer.

STABLE HOMES BUILT ON LOVE



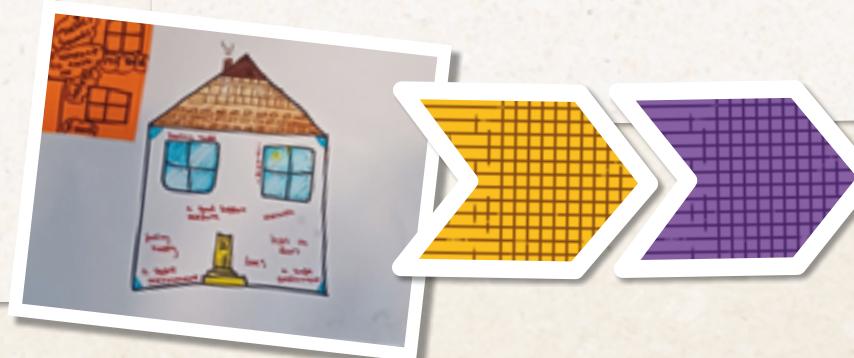
WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED?

1. Listened to what children and carers told us and developed better support to foster carers through our CAMHS specialist link, an improved training and support offer, and by launching Mockingbird⁸ across the county. These improvements are designed to help carers provide the long-term, loving care our children need.
2. Bucking national trends, we have seen an increase in the number of foster carers in Gloucestershire, but we know we have more to do to ensure we have a great foster family for every child that needs one. We have reviewed our service and put a plan in place to continue to transform the service we offer and ensure we continue to be the foster carer of choice in Gloucestershire. We have worked with district councils and independent providers to increase the availability of registered children's homes and supported accommodation in the county, enabling better matching and closer working relationships with children and providers.
3. Always choosing homes rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted unless there is a very good reason not to.

4

4. Developed a Joint Housing Protocol with district councils for care leavers that ensures priority and consistency of support when our young people are ready to move into their first tenancy.
5. Improved our '**Staying Put**' offer and delivered our '**Staying Close**' offer providing greater stability and continuity of relationships between young people and their carers.
6. Launched our supported lodgings scheme, **Launchpad**.
7. Launched a specialist team who work with kinship and connected carers to ensure our support offer is equal to or better than that offered to all foster carers. This offer recognises the additional challenges some kinship and connected carers face and acted to prioritise kinship and connected care.

8. Delivered with the Fostering Network, Mockingbird is an evidence-based fostering model structured around the support and relationships an extended family provides. The model nurtures the relationships between children, young people and foster families supporting them to build a resilient and caring community.



WHAT MORE WILL WE DO?

1. Open our own children's homes in 2025, and supported accommodation in 2026. We are developing specialist care for children with the most complex of emotional and mental health needs. This is part of our new sufficiency strategy, Home@theHeart, that sets out how we will provide the loving homes children need locally.
2. Focus on finding the right carers first time, and supporting stability of home and carer by developing a needs and outcomes focused matching process. We will provide wraparound support when its needed, ensuring children in and leaving our care have the education, training, and employment opportunities they deserve.
3. Train our foster carers in trauma informed practice to listen, respond to and understand the experiences of children and young people in care.
4. Always ask, "is this good enough for my child?", and if the answer is "no," we will take action to affect change.
5. Expand the Mockingbird model to deliver six 'constellations' (a caring support community of up to ten families) across the county.



6. Review our reunification service to see what more we can do to support birth families and parents to care for their children when it is safe to do so.
7. Review our support and remuneration package to Gloucestershire foster carers, continuing to grow an enhanced offer that values our foster carers.
8. Work with the regional fostering hub to recruit and retain more foster carers and supported lodgings post, adapting regional campaigns to continue to attract local carers.
9. Develop our rent guarantee scheme to ensure our care leavers in supported accommodation do not incur exceptionally high costs when they start to work.

STAYING SAFE



WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED?

1. Launched a complex safeguarding strategy and implemented district level multiagency child exploitation (MACE) and missing meetings.
2. My Safety Plan meetings were developed with children and young people and are now embedded. These meetings and plans help keep children and young people safe from exploitation and abuse in the community and are designed to involve children and young people in assessment and decision making.
3. Council Tax relief wherever our young people live, helping secure safe and stable accommodation.
4. Launched a new **Missing Strategy** to ensure we act quickly when a child or young person is missing, and better understand what helps prevent a child or young person from going missing.
5. Secured Department for Education funding to deliver a 'single view of a child' digital platform that will enable us to more quickly share information and assess risk for individuals and specific cohorts of children.



5

WHAT MORE WILL WE DO?

1. Always check that children and young people can identify the trusted adults in their life who they feel able to confide in and always tell children and young people who their contact is when their worker will be away.
2. Work with schools, carers, and others to improve school attendance for children in care and reduce school absence as we know school is linked to your safety.
3. Commission a review of our response to Harm Outside the Home (HOTH) through the **Gloucestershire Children's Safeguarding Partnership (GSCP)** to continue to develop ways to keep children and young people safe.
4. Work with partners to improve provision, care and support for children and young people when needs are at their highest, including reducing the number of children in care in need of deprivation of liberty or in touch with youth justice services.
5. Deliver the 'single view of a child' project, enabling improved information sharing, reducing the number of times children and young people are asked to tell their story, and improving speed of risk assessment.
6. Develop a safer relationships and online safety toolkit for carers, social workers, and young people.

ACHIEVING YOUR POTENTIAL



WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED?

1. Our Virtual School works closely with education providers and children's social care to support attendance at the best schools in and out of county, helping children achieve our best GCSE results ever in the summer of 2024.
2. Developed and delivering an Independent Living Skills programme with Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) accreditation.
3. Encouraged care leavers to Know Your Rights and what you can expect:
 - Reviewed and launched an improved local offer for care leavers.
 - Launched the regional Graduating Care offer and mobile phone app, providing a consistent offer no matter which area a young person lives in.
 - Joined the Care Leaver's Covenant⁹ national inclusion programme that supports care leavers aged 16-25 to live independently by creating meaningful opportunities and supporting care leavers to access them in five key areas:

- Independent living
- Education, employment, and training
- Mental and physical health
- Finance

4. Working through the virtual school, council's inclusive employment team and HR team, we have created bespoke internships and apprenticeships for care leavers, with the council and local NHS.
5. Being care experienced is recognised by the county council and Gloucester City Council as a protected characteristic where inclusion support and adjustments are offered in the workplace, and we monitor our progress.
6. Subsidised travel, the provision of bus passes and personal transport budgets help children and young people to get to and from their education, training, or employment destination.
7. Celebrated success through:
 - Annual education achievement awards held at Gloucestershire University.
 - Established 'The Exceptionals Awards' celebrating our children and young people's multiple talents and achievements.
 - Annual play day and fostering celebration events.
 - Celebrate national care leavers week each year, bringing young people together and raising awareness through a series of activities and events.

9. About the CLC - Care Leaver Covenant

6

ACHIEVING YOUR POTENTIAL

WHAT MORE WILL WE DO?

1. Offer every child/young person a career consultation in Years 10-11 and work with the council, partners, local businesses, and organisations to offer work experience, training, sponsorship and employment opportunities in each child's chosen field or taster opportunities when this is more appropriate.
2. Ensure carers and practitioners are 'education champions,' focused on improving attendance, attainment and inclusion in school, college, training, and employment.
3. Deliver an education, training and employment summit that will bring local employers, educators, and trainers together to develop an education, training, and employment pledge to children in and leaving our care. The council will lead the way by developing a guaranteed offer to 'join the family firm.'
4. Offer trauma informed and relational training to employers and training providers.
5. Review our care leaver offer and pledge to children in care annually, always striving to achieve more.
6. Make sure every child has their national insurance number, identity documents and a bank account before the age of 18 years.
7. Offer independent travel training for every child or young person that needs it and help with driving licenses and learning to drive when this will help with access to education, training, and employment opportunities.
8. Continue to champion and celebrate success, building on the unique strengths and abilities of each child and young person.



HOW we'll know WE'RE ACHIEVING OUR PRIORITIES

There are three main ways by which we'll know if we're achieving the priorities we have set out here. We will set ourselves challenging targets and will strive for continuous improvement, reporting on how we're doing to our corporate parenting group as well as to other forums:

FEEDBACK

Children, young people, and family feedback is important to us. We have a range of ways of capturing it and will use it to continue to improve and develop services. The ways in which we gather feedback include:

- Feedback at reviews, personal education planning and other meetings
- Views of Ambassadors and Voice Gloucestershire Forums
- Mind of My Own
- Brightspots survey
- Compliments and complaints

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KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

- We provide the Department for Education with information across a range of indicators on an annual basis that helps us understand how our children and young people are doing. This information is published and enables comparison with other local authorities and with national performance. Each year we set a target for improved performance and track our performance monthly, taking action to improve or stretching targets where needed. We report on our performance in a range of meetings, including a report to each full council meeting, to corporate parenting group, children and families overview and scrutiny committee and ambitions board.
- The key indicators that will tell us whether we're achieving for our children and young people include:
 - The demographics of our care population.
 - The rate of care, entry to care, time spent in and destination of exit from care.
 - The type, locality, stability and suitability of the children's homes, foster care, and independent accommodation where our children and young people live.
 - The stability of social worker for children in care and care leavers.
 - The frequency we see children and young people and the timeliness of plans and reviews.
 - The education, training and employment outcomes for children and young people.
 - The physical and emotional health of children and young people.
 - The number and rate/return of missing children.
 - The number and rate of children and young people in touch with youth justice services.



3

QUALITY ASSURANCE INFORMATION:

Supported by our Social Work Academy and quality assurance team, we regularly evaluate the impact of services. This goes beyond simply counting whether a service or activity is in place to consider the impact and appropriateness of the services provided. We do this in a number of ways, including hearing from children and young people, practitioners, managers, and partners, as well as examining our records. Findings are fed back on an individual and aggregated basis so that we learn and take action to improve for all children and young people. Our quality assurance activity is set out in our quality assurance framework and is reported in a similar way to the performance indicators. It includes:

- Auditing individual children and young people's records, including undertaking multiagency audits.
- Dip sampling specific areas, for example evaluating the quality-of-care plans.
- Twice yearly practice week, when senior managers come alongside practitioners and managers to observe and support practice.
- 'Cracking quality' sessions which use appreciative inquiry to explore, amplify and spread best practice.
- Rapid review, local child safeguarding practice review and non-statutory multi-agency learning review following a serious incident.



The Gloucestershire Corporate Parenting Group will provide the governance to ensure we deliver what we have promised in this strategy. It is made up of key representatives with relevant corporate parenting responsibilities, including elected members from each political group. The group is chaired by Cllr Paul McLain, (Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding) who is the accountable lead member for Children's Services.

EVERYONE INVOLVED

There are a wide range of people and organisations that must work together for us to achieve our goals. These include:

THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, LEAD MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES:

To provide the political and professional leadership of our corporate parenting commitment.

THE CORPORATE PARENTING GROUP:

Chaired by the Lead Member for Children and made up of key representatives with relevant corporate parenting responsibilities, including elected members from each political group. It provides the governance to oversee delivery of this Corporate Parenting Strategy. Councillors sitting on the Corporate Parenting Group have each agreed to champion the priorities set out in the strategy.

ALL COUNCILLORS NEED TO BE AWARE OF THEIR CORPORATE PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES AND MUST:

Have a clear understanding and awareness of the issues for children in care and care leavers in Gloucestershire

- Champion the interests of looked after children and care leavers
- Listen to children in care and care leavers and ensure that they are consulted on decisions that affect them

- Help care leavers to secure successful careers by helping to identify and encourage ways for them to gain work experience, training and opportunities
- Challenge whether the council as a corporate parent is keeping the promises made in the Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Be equally mindful and responsive to children placed out of the county
- Ask how all elements of council business can impact children in care and care leavers
- Consistently ask 'Would this be good enough for my own child?'

ALL COUNCIL DEPARTMENTS:

All councillors and council officers share corporate parenting responsibilities and will be challenged to explore opportunities for Children in Care and Care leavers within their teams with training provided by our ambassadors.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES:

Those leading, developing and delivering work in Children's Services are likely to have most significant impact for children in care and care leavers. Corporate parenting principles will be at the heart of our practice and responses throughout social care. The quality of relationships that young people have with their carers and the professionals closest to them is crucial to their success whilst in and leaving care. They have told us they need to be listened to and involved in decision-making and most of all, their need to be parented like other children. And supports the gap between being parented by birth parents to being in the care of, or leaving the care of, the Local Authority.





THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL AND COLLEGE:

Gloucestershire's Virtual School for looked after children is responsible for providing leadership, strategic direction and foster partnership- working with schools to secure successful educational outcomes for all looked after children and young people. It maintains an overview of all looked after children to ensure they can sustain a school place and that there is support in place designed to meet their individual needs. Looked after children are more likely to be excluded from education than their peers. However, the assumption being that being looked after leads to poor outcomes is incorrect. Educational targets for children in care and care leavers must be higher and further reaching.

SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, AND OTHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS:

Responsible for improving the physical, mental and emotional health of all looked after children and care leavers. Health assessments must be undertaken and specialist nurses for looked after children must ensure that Personal Health Plans (Health Passports) are developed with the child or young person and that they are fully implemented. Access to support at the right time in childhood is crucial and transitions to adult health services will be managed sensitively and with full cooperation with young people.

HOUSING PROVIDERS:

Playing an essential role by working with Gloucestershire County Council to provide enough good-quality accommodation for care leavers who are ready to live more independently and provide a range of 'starter' accommodation for care leavers wanting to move from supported accommodation.



COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS:

Many community organisations across Gloucestershire support our children in care and care leavers, providing important services and assistance, including advice and guidance, mentoring, supported housing, and drug and alcohol services. These are vital to the task of preventing care leavers from needing the intervention of statutory services.

AMBASSADORS:

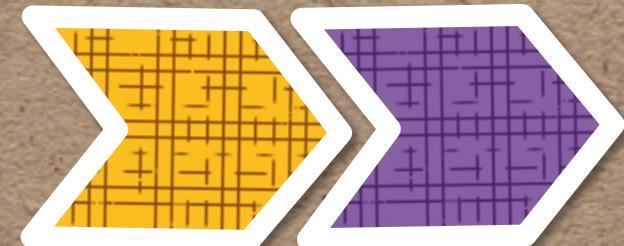
In Gloucestershire, we are committed to listening to the views of the children we work with and seeking their guidance in the design and delivery of services. The Ambassadors will continue to be a key group in assisting the council to deliver our corporate parenting strategy. The group will undertake specific tasks and projects on behalf of all our looked after children and care leavers and continue to represent Gloucestershire at various national forums. Ambassadors will play a key role in the recruitment of staff and carers and contribute to service developments.

FOSTER CARERS:

In Gloucestershire we value our foster carers and acknowledge the work that they do. We have a strong fostering liaison group, and this will continue to assist us in developing the best care arrangements for our children and young people.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

We believe in the adage 'it takes a village to raise a child' that's why the following people have committed to ensuring their organisation helps deliver our corporate parenting strategy 2024-27:



- Leader of the County Council
- Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding
- Chief Executive of the County Council
- Director of Children's Services
- Political Group Leaders
- District Council Leaders
- District Council Chief Executive Officers
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Chief Constable for Gloucestershire
- Integrated Care Service Chief Executive Officer
- Voluntary Community Sector Alliance Chief Officer
- Ambassadors on behalf of children and young people
- School Head Teacher Associations and college leads

We will take responsibility for delivering our strategy, for reviewing outcomes, revising plans and championing children in care and care leavers in all that we do. It's set out in the title of our strategy, and we really do believe that the sky's the limit, we will always be ambitious and will never give up.

