

# North Tyneside Council

## Report to Cabinet

**Date:**

**Title:** Children in Our Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2024-26

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<b>Portfolio(s):</b> Children Young People and Learning	<b>Cabinet Member(s):</b> Cllr Peter Earley
<b>Report from Service</b>	
<b>Area:</b>	Childrens Social Care
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Julie Firth, Director Childrens Services      Tel: 0191643 1454
<b>Wards affected:</b>	All

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### PART 1

#### 1.1 Executive Summary:

All local authorities are required, to produce and regularly update a Strategy in relation to how they will fulfil their responsibilities for children in their care and care leavers.

The Authority's governance arrangements require the Strategy to be agreed by Cabinet and oversight of delivery of the actions set out in the Strategy is undertaken by the Authority's Corporate Parenting Forum which is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Supporting and Protecting Children.

The Children in Our Care and Care Leavers Strategy for 2024-26 has been developed after consulting with children in the Authority's care and care leavers in relation to what they identify as their priorities. Four multi agency working groups sit under the Authority's Corporate Parenting Forum arrangements, to deliver the action plan for these priorities, each chaired by a member of the Authority's Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

The priorities are:

- care experienced children and young people status
- arts and culture
- transitions
- emotional health and wellbeing, and
- voice of the child.

## **1.2 Recommendation(s):**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (1) Notes the work that has been undertaken by the Authority with children in our care, care leavers and its partners, to co-produce the Children in Our Care and Care Leavers Strategy for 2024-2026, appended to this report.
- (2) Endorses the Children in Our Care and Care Leavers Strategy for 2024-2026 appended to this report; and
- (3) Agree that the Corporate Parenting Forum will scrutinise the delivery of the Strategy and associated action plan and report annually on progress against the action plan to Family Friendly sub-committee.

## **1.3 Forward Plan:**

Twenty-eight days' notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2024.

## **1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework**

This report relates to the following priorities in the 2021/25 Our North Tyneside Plan:

- A Family Friendly North Tyneside
- A Caring North Tyneside

## 1.5 Information:

- 1.5.1 The Children in our Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2024-2026 (“the Strategy”) is a statutory document that is required as part of the Authority’s Corporate Parenting responsibilities.
- 1.5.2 When a child comes into the care of the Authority, the Authority becomes their Corporate Parent. This means it is the collective responsibility of the Authority its’ employees, Elected Members and partner agencies, to provide the best possible care and safeguarding for that child or young person. The litmus test for this is ‘Would this be good enough for my child?’
- 1.5.3 The role of monitoring that the Authority’s corporate parenting responsibilities are met as well as ensuring that it discharges its corporate parenting role lies with the Authority’s Corporate Parenting Forum which is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Supporting and Protecting Children. It is a requirement for local authority areas to have a Corporate Parenting Forum.
- 1.5.4 The Authority’s Corporate Parenting Forum receives and reviews performance information and reports from the Multi Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP) and provides robust scrutiny and challenge.
- 1.5.5 MALAP is a forum of professionals drawn from partner agencies, including health, education, children’s mental health services, as well as representatives from the Authority’s teams including fostering, HIVE (integrated education and health services for cared for children), the Authority’s children’s homes and leaving care team. There are also representatives from the voluntary sector. MALAP meets twice yearly to oversee the work of the sub-groups who meet on a more frequent basis.
- 1.5.6 It is the work of the MALAP subgroups which drives forward the practice and progress of the priorities as identified and included in the Strategy. These subgroups are titled as follows:
- Voice of the Child
  - Care2Work
  - Sufficiency, and

- Health.

1.5.7 There is strong support from the Authority's Senior Leadership Team and partner's corporate parenting priorities, as outlined in the Strategy. As such, the subgroups are now chaired by a senior leader from different Directorates, across the Authority.

1.5.8 The Strategy was developed following consultation with the Authority's Children in Care Council. The views of children in care and care leavers were sought from different sources; these included annual conversations (a consultation completed individually with children in the Authority's care to gather their views), information captured within Personal Education Plans, which set out what children's aspirations are, and from counsellors in HIVE, as well as Independent Reviewing Officers and Social Work visits. The priorities identified were determined as a result of this captured information alongside feedback from the North East Regional Children in Care Council.

1.5.9 The priorities identified in the Strategy for the following 2 years are as follows.

- **Care Experienced Young People Status:** develop opportunities for children in our care and care leavers and make sure their care experienced status does not disadvantage them.
- **Arts and Culture:** support young people to have the opportunity to take part in new opportunities both locally and nationally. This could include theatre and art exhibition opportunities.
- **Transitions:** look at ways to make sure that children and young people experience smoother transitions when cared for by the Authority.
- **Emotional health and Wellbeing:** ensure children in care and care leavers feel safe, loved and have positive mental health.
- **Voice of the Child:** ensuring the Authority, as corporate parent, actively listens, knows and understands what is important to our children in care

and care leavers. Ensure children in our care and care leavers know and understand what is on offer, what work is being undertaken on their behalf and how the local authority is looking after them as corporate parents.

The Authority and its partners agencies track progress on delivering these priorities by setting measurable targets as outlined within the Action Plan in the Strategy.

## **1.6 Decision options:**

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

### Option 1

To agree the recommendations in paragraph 1.2 of this Report.

### Option 2

Not to agree the recommendations set out in paragraph 1.2 of this report.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

## **1.7 Reasons for recommended option:**

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

The priorities set out in the Strategy have been identified through consultation with young people as set out in this report.

The priorities and method of delivering these, have been endorsed by multi agency partners and stakeholders including the Authority's Corporate Parenting Forum and the Multi Agency Looked after Partnership (MALAP).

## **1.8 Appendices:**

Appendix: Children in our Care and Care leavers Strategy 2024-26

## **1.9 Contact officers:**

Mary Connor Head of Safeguarding and Childrens Services

[mary.connor@northtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:mary.connor@northtyneside.gov.uk)

Jackie Ingram Senior Manager Children in Care and Resources

[Jackie.ingram@northtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:Jackie.ingram@northtyneside.gov.uk)

### **1.10 Background information:**

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

- 1) Working Together to Safeguard Children – Statutory Guidance published by the Department for Education

## **PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING**

### **2.1 Finance and other resources**

The priorities that have been identified through the strategy to be worked on over the next two years potentially do have financial and other resource implications. The decision-making in relation to actioning proposals within the working groups looking at the priorities will have reference and consideration to the finance and resource. Each of the working groups is to be chaired by a member of SLT and decisions in relation to finance and resource will follow the appropriate governance structure.

### **2.2 Legal**

The Authority has a statutory requirement to produce a strategy setting out how it fulfils its duties as a corporate parent to children in its care and care leavers up to the age of 25. The Strategy appended to the report and the action planning and decision-making processes described in this report fulfil that statutory duty.

### **2.3 Consultation/community engagement**

#### **2.3.1 Internal Consultation**

The proposed Strategy has been presented to relevant groups within children's services to gather feedback. The proposed priorities and delivery methods have been discussed and agreed with the Authority's SLT.

#### **2.3.2 External Consultation/Engagement**

Children in the Authority's care and care leavers were consulted as set out in the report in paragraph 1.5.8 to gather information to set the priorities for the Strategy. Further consultation has taken place with multi agency partners and stakeholders through the Multi Agency Looked after Partnership (MALAP) and Corporate Parenting Forum

## **2.4 Human rights**

This strategy supports the UN convention on the Rights of the child and Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, namely the qualified right to a family life by supporting children in the Authority's care and care leavers to continue to have strong networks and support them to become adults who can have positive futures.

## **2.5 Equalities and diversity**

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are disproportionately represented within the children in care and care leavers population. The Authority has a higher number of children and young adults within this population from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups. This has been discussed and considered in the development of the Strategy.

## **2.6 Risk management**

Inability to deliver on this strategy would leave the authority at risk of not being statutorily compliant with its duties.

## **2.7 Crime and disorder**

Adults who are care leavers are disproportionality represented within the offending and prison population. The Strategy supports ensuring the local authority provide as many opportunities to young people as possible to avoid this.

## **2.8 Environment and sustainability**

Actions identified within the delivery of the priorities will be mindful of the need to support environmental and sustainability issues.

### PART 3 – SIGN OFF

- Chief Executive  X
- Director(s) of Service  X
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s)  X
- Chief Finance Officer  X
- Monitoring Officer  X
- Interim Director  
of Corporate Strategy  
and Customer Service  X