

Corporate Parenting Strategy November 2014 – August 2016

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Foreword

“Despite the considerable national focus on the needs of looked after children in recent years, there continues to be a significant gap between the outcomes for these children and young people and those of their peers.

There is more to being a good parent than keeping children safe – every child needs to feel that parents are “there” for them through thick and thin. Children in the care system are no different. For children in care, the people charged with this responsibility are elected members and the officers of the local authority.

1. Introduction

Corporate parenting is the term used to describe the duties and responsibilities of a local authority in respect of the children looked after by the authority. Although the management of children’s social care services is the responsibility of the London Borough of Harrow, parental responsibility for looked after children is the responsibility of the whole council. In addition the local authority should enrol the support of its partner agencies in helping them to fulfil their obligations in respect of their corporate parenting responsibilities for the children looked after by the council.

In 1998 the secretary of state for health, Frank Dobson, wrote to all local authority councillors reminding them that they were ultimately responsible for the quality of care in their council for children looked after by them. Corporate parenting relates to all children looked after by the authority, wherever they are placed, including young people receiving after care services up to, in some circumstances, 25 years of age.

Corporate parenting is about offering at least the same standards of care as would a ‘reasonable parent’ in respect of the children looked after by the council. The outcomes for children who have been looked after can be poor with the reasons which brought them into care such as abuse, neglect, separation, loss and rejection significantly affecting their subsequent life experiences. As adults; they do less well educationally; they are over represented in the criminal justice system; have poorer health outcomes including an increased risk of suffering from mental health difficulties; have an increased likelihood of becoming homeless and experience economic and relationships difficulties in their own families.

It is important that being looked after responds effectively to this disadvantage.

The thrust of corporate parenting is about improving the life chances of children looked after – protecting their welfare, promoting their wellbeing, enhancing their lives and helping them reach their full potential. Everyone should have high aspirations for, and expectations of, children who are looked after

A key strand of corporate parenting is that it should be undertaken in consultation with children and young people who should have a say about how services for them are provided on both an individual and collective basis.

In addition to enrolling the support of all chief officers within the local authority and partner agencies such as police, probation, youth justice, connexions, health and schools, the local authority should harness the support and resources of local communities, sport and leisure facilities, business and faith groups.

2. Our Vision

As corporate parents we are committed to ensuring that every child looked after has the best possible start in life, is given help to achieve their potential and experience safe and positive parenting.

- **We want our children and young people to be happy and healthy, to be safe and protected from harm and sexual exploitation and be supported into adulthood.**
- We want our children to have everything that good parents want for their children.
- We want our looked after children and young people to work with us, along with their parents and carers, in shaping how we manage and organise the planning, resources and services that support and care for them.
- We want them to achieve their potential especially in education, to make the most of the opportunities offered and to participate in the decisions affecting their care and their lives.
- We want our looked after children to be in placements that are as close as possible to their homes where they feel safe, happy and taken care of.
- We want our looked after children and young people to be supported in maintaining their culture, ethnicity and religion and to be supported to maximise the opportunities available to them.
- We want young people leaving care to be prepared for independent living, and supported to participate fully as active citizens into adulthood.

3. Achievements to date and examples of good practice

- Looked after children are offered, as a priority, places in their preferred schools in the borough
- Annual achievement celebration for looked after children, organised by children and young people, beyond educational attainment
- Annual foster carer celebration and awards evening
- All children are given extra tuition according to their need
- The Staying Put scheme enables care leavers to remain with their foster carers after their 18th birthday
- Improved placement stability
- Care Leavers claim their entitlement to Housing Benefit appropriately
- Refreshed Care Leavers Charter (Oct 2014)
- Full engagement with 2 year old, and 3 and 4 year old nursery offers
- Virtual School promotion of £1900 pupil premium funding use and monitoring for impact
- Following a recent review of council income collection strategy, Harrow's Vulnerability Policy identifies Young people leaving care and that young customers leaving care may be unable to manage their financial affairs without support and would be considered as vulnerable
- Savings policy - inconsistency of application across different placements corrected
- LINAB – "Language is not a Barrier" Club for Care Leavers continued and weekend activities developed
- Two ex LAC/Leaving care involved as mentors with the Harrow Mentoring Project
- School Holiday Activities programmes LAC engagement: summer 2014 - 19 LAC young people involved; Spring half term 2014 – 10 LAC (12.5%); Easter 2014 – 15 LAC (16%)
- Takeover Day 2013 involved 4 looked after children

4. The Corporate Parenting Strategy

4.1 Corporate Parenting Panel

This strategy outlines our aspirations for looked after children and young people and sets out the actions we intend to take to achieve them.

Harrow Council is ambitious for looked after children and young people and as corporate parent for around 170¹ children, our priority is to secure the very best care and opportunities for them. To achieve this we will work in partnership with children, young people, their families and partner agencies to ensure that children and young people enjoy their childhood and succeed in adult life. This commitment includes those care leavers for whom we have responsibility to support their transition into adulthood. This means that “children in care should be cared about, not just cared for”.

The Corporate Parenting Panel², a Council Committee, made up from elected members, provides strategic leadership to ensure the council is delivering its corporate parenting duties. It has responsibility to advise officers about action to improve outcomes and life chances for all its Looked After Children and Care Leavers and comment on reviewing and developing policy in key areas such as the review process. Agendas, reports and minutes are published on the council website.

All councillors hold a responsibility as corporate parents. Members’ induction is mandatory with training offered or all councillors at least annually.

Responsibility for providing excellent corporate parenting must be shared across all services with clear accountability. The Director of Children and Families (DCS) and the Lead Member are pivotal in ensuring that all services support best outcomes for children in care.

A strategic multi-agency Corporate Parenting Officers Group has responsibility for supporting Panel members implementing this strategy and for developing an action plan that is clear and measures impact and outcomes.

Progress in meeting the priorities included in this strategy is overseen by the Corporate Parenting Panel, chaired by Councillor Mitzi Green and Simon Brown, Lead Member for Children and Families.

4.2 Key reference documents used to hold officers and providers to account for CLA life outcomes include:

Management Performance reports

Quarterly performance activity reports
Children & Families Complaints Annual Report 2013-14

Placement and planning – quality and timeliness:

Statement of Purpose for the Adoption Service – for annual CPP approval
Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service – for annual CPP approval
Placement Sufficiency Strategy³ 2014-15
Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report – due Dec 2014
Adoption and Fostering Panel Annual report 2013-14
Case Tracking Annual Report

Education, employment and training specific – attainment and achievement of potential:

¹ Snapshot data: 31.10.14

²<http://www.harrow.gov.uk/www2/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=788> Purpose, role & membership

³ See priority 6.4

Virtual Headteacher Annual Report 2013-14
Virtual School Development Plan 2014-15
Not in employment, education or training [NEETs] Care Leavers - twice yearly reports

Health including dental checks

Regular Provider reports

Participation

Children and young people's engagement and feedback – twice yearly reports

Crime: youth offending/re-offending

Housing and Childrens Services Protocol for homeless 16 to 17 year olds

4.3 Management performance information is required by the corporate parenting panel to enable robust scrutiny of performance, to inform priorities and determine what action needs to be taken.

To inform the work of the corporate parenting board and to enable it to set priorities performance management information is necessary. This information relates to the life chances of children looked after, supported by research and evidence as to where activity can be directed which makes a difference. This focuses on the areas where children looked after historically do not do well and which, if improved, make a difference as to how they will fare as adults. This includes:-

- Improving their educational achievement, school attendance and attainment,
- Getting a job and living in a good standard of accommodation on becoming a care leaver
- Promoting their health (both physical and emotional),
- Having stable placements
- Supporting offenders to reintegrate into work, education and establish positive relationships
- Mitigating the negative impact of young people who go missing
- Supporting care leavers who are parents to successfully care for their children

5. What makes a difference?

The following are a range of activities which can act as protective factors and can help militate against some of the disadvantage which may have been experienced by looked after children. They are also actions undertaken by a good parent to give their children a good start in life. Because of their experiences, some children may need extra support to take advantage of opportunities offered.

5.1 Education

Education is probably the single most influential factor in ensuring that children fare well and are successful as adults. Things which support educational achievement and attainment of looked after children are that they are:-

- offered, as priority, places in the schools that are best for them
- not excluded from school
- provided with extra help and tuition, particularly at test and examination times
- encouraged and supported to go on to further and higher education

5.2 Placements

Children do best in families, preferably their own but if they are unable to live with their own family then an alternative family is the best option and this may include living with someone

within their own extended family, a foster family or under Residence, Special Guardianship or Adoption Orders. If children cannot live in a family setting good quality residential care can be a positive option.

There are a number of ways by which children's placements can be supported, for example by:-

- Harnessing the resources of the borough to advertise for foster and adoptive carers.
- Making available a range of resources to support the recruitment, training and approval of foster and adoptive carers
- Maximising the resources available to enhance children's lives
- Providing accommodation to enable children to return to live with their family or with foster or adoptive carers
- Providing finance, professional support and expertise to extend foster or adoptive carers' homes to enable brothers and sisters to live together or to increase the number of children which a carer can accommodate.

As well as improving children's life chances through stable family settings, such placements are economically advantageous to the Council compared to the use of residential care.

5.3 Interests and talents

Having an interest or a talent is a very significant factor in improving children's life chances and hence when a child has an interest or a talent whatever this is it should be nurtured and developed improving self-esteem and achievement which often result in much better outcomes in adult life.

Supporting children's interests and talents can be achieved in the following ways, by:-

- Identifying a mentor within the Council who can coach, encourage and develop these skills and talents
- Making available resources to purchase any special equipment, clothing or materials to enable the child to participate on an equal footing with other children

5.4 Health

Improving children's health and wellbeing is not just about medical, dental checks and eye tests – important though these are - it is about those caring for them being concerned and alert to children's wellbeing both physical and emotional and responding in a timely and appropriately manner.

5.5 Jobs, apprenticeships and work experience

The LBH and its partner agencies are major employers in the borough and in respect of looked after children they are the 'family businesses'.

As 'family businesses' the following opportunities could be made available to looked after young people in when they leave school:-

- Work experience opportunities particularly in preparation for higher or further education
- Priority access to apprenticeships within the Council
- Priority access to employment with the LBH or its partner agencies
- Making available LBH employees to help prepare/equip young people for world of work, higher or further education

Employees could offer support and guidance to looked after young people and care leavers in respect of work experience, jobs, apprenticeships, further and higher education on both a professional and personal capacity, if appropriate.

5.6 Offending

Young people's lives can be blighted by offending behaviour. It affects their ability to obtain and keep jobs, maintain stable relationships and somewhere decent to live. Diverting young people from and reducing offending is critical to their life experiences as adults.

The Youth Offending Service has a key role in working with looked after children who offend.

5.7 Celebration of achievements

As well as focusing on activities to improve their life chances it is important to recognise and celebrate the achievements and successes of looked after children.

6. Key Priorities

6.1 Improve the education attainment and school attendance of looked after children; narrow the gap with other children

The role of Harrow Virtual School⁴ is to raise the attainment and outcomes of Harrow's Children Looked After⁵(CLA). The Virtual School do this by challenging and supporting the schools, as well as providing a support service to a number of stakeholders in order to ensure that all Harrow CLA and Care Leavers receive a high standard of education and are involved in appropriate educational activities. The Virtual School focus their work on raising the aspirations of young people and relevant professionals so that they can reach their potential and move forward into further and higher education and gainful employment. In July 2014 there were 92 CLAs from Reception to Year 11 and 62 Post 16 Care Leavers (Years 12 and 13).

The Virtual Headteacher Annual Report informs the corporate parenting agenda regarding CLA educational attainment, school attendance, employment and training, to accelerate progress to Narrow the Gap.

Designated Teachers network

Training and support is provided through the linked teachers from schools in Harrow. This has recently been combined with the group run by the Local Safeguarding Children Board, to enable more joined up work.

Alternative education provision

Extract from VHT 2013-14 Annual Report, future development activities:

- Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and Pathway plans more outcome focused and specific:95% up to date
- Raise attainment outcomes – target for each child or young person to match national standards
- Improve attendance % of all CLA and reduce exclusions
- Increase liaison and support to reduce time students are not registered at school, especially where placed out of borough and attending
- Further raise awareness and understanding of all placement staff and allocated social workers regarding the significance of PEPS and Pathway plans
- Evaluate and report the impact of the Pupil Premium for CLA.

⁴ 2013-14 VHT Annual Report

⁵ When asked, Harrow children and young people wanted to be known as **Children Looked After**, ie recognising they are children first and looked after second. The national term used is Looked After Children.

6.2 Improve the involvement and participation of young people in all services for children looked after and care leavers

Participation

Children and young people looked after will be treated with respect by all who are involved with them, and have access to a range of activities to facilitate their participation in service development.

Harrow's **Participation Strategy**⁶ sets out our vision for involving children and young people in influencing the services which we provide. Their views will be listened to and they will be involved in making decisions about their lives. They will be involved in the planning, provision and evaluation of the services they need. They will know how to get information and support as well as how to raise a concern.

The child's voice will be at the centre of all decision making and we will take time to talk to children on their own and can tell the child's journey.

Our aim is that participation is a routine element of practice for all practitioners and managers, keeping the voice of the child at the heart of decision making :That there is a culture that changes things for children and young people and that we work together and we improve the quality of case work and managing risk to the child. We hold the child's perspective and we develop effective systems that keep children safe using the ideas they offer us.

The Children in Care Council "Beyond Limits"⁷

The Beyond Limits group is for all children and young people who are looked after aged 11-25 years, separated into an older and younger group for age appropriate activities.

Meeting monthly, currently around a core group of 6-8 young people, the group aims to listen to the opinions of children and young people and to be the voice for all children looked after. It liaises with a range of professionals to resolve the difficulties young people may encounter. Face to face: The group meets with the Corporate Parenting Panel every 4 months, and also with the Director of Children and Families, and the Director of Targeted Services.

Child's Voice Monthly newsletter

A monthly newsletter has been developed to promote the child's voice, celebrate good practice and to encourage staff to listen to children and young people, taking action when appropriate. An editorial team, including children and young people, is being developed.

Pre LAC Review consultation

The Independent Reviewing Officer consults with children looked after two weeks prior to their statutory review. Young people are supported by their placements, carers, social worker, advocates or the Children's Participation Co-ordinator if required. Online and printed feedback sheets are provided, and work to refresh the content and improve response rates is in progress.

Celebration of achievement awards – annual event

An annual event is held to celebrate the achievements and attainment of children and young people who are looked after. This event is organised in consultation with young people who co-host the event, and perform. The last event was held in February 2015.

Leaving Care Charter – refreshed Oct 2014

The Leaving Care Charter was reviewed and re- launched, following consultation with young people.

⁶ Our Participation Strategy 2013-2015

⁷ Now includes previous separate Young Voices group

Leaving Care Forum

The Leaving Care Forum meets quarterly, as a well attended forum which offers young people the opportunity to have direct contact with senior managers. Further work is being undertaken to enable young people to lead and develop the forum for themselves.

The young people have been very engaged in these sessions and offer valuable feedback and input into service development e.g. refreshing the charter, developing 'what a good placement looks like' highlighting what's important to young people in placement matching and clarifying what support is required in order for us to ensure as many young care leavers as possible are able to go to the university of their choice.

Harrow Youth Parliament

Two looked after children are representatives.

Takeover Day November

2013 Looked after children involved

Priority Actions for 2014-16

- **To strengthen the Children in Care Council 'Beyond Limits' through increases participation of children looked after and care leavers**
- **Ensure that the Corporate Parenting Panel receives regular feedback from children looked after and takes any necessary action arising from that feedback**
- **Expand participation engagement with CLA placed out of borough**
- **Increase response rates through refreshed feedback options for CLA reviews and CP Conferences**
- **Advocacy and Independent Visitor Services are used by children and young people to ensure their voices are heard**

6.3 Children looked after will be happy and healthy, safe and protected from harm and sexual exploitation: improve the physical, emotional and social health and wellbeing of children looked after and care leavers

Children Looked After are the responsibility of the local authority in the same way as we are responsible for our own children. We therefore require the same standard of health and wellbeing, but often these children enter the care system with worse levels of health due to poor parenting, chaotic lifestyles, poverty, neglect and abuse. Therefore it is the role and the responsibility of the Provider of these services, to ensure health and wellbeing needs are addressed and outcomes improve to the same standard as peers in Harrow.

Specific outcomes we are aiming for all Children Looked After to Achieve:

- Reach their developmental milestones at appropriate age
- Good physical health including attaining a healthy weight, taking regular exercise and eating a balanced and nutritious diet
- Improved levels of oral health and fewer dental cavities
- Immunised against preventable diseases
- A wider and more positive social and healthy lifestyle including strong self-esteem, positive image of self (including body image), free from bullying and free from violence and abuse
- Good mental, emotional and behavioural health and a strong sense of personal and emotional wellbeing.

- Educational attainment and attendance improved as a result of better health and well-being
- Less harmful use of substances including alcohol, drugs and tobacco
- Healthy and appropriate relationships and awareness of good sexual health
- Reduction in the number of CLA becoming teenage parents
- CLA placements are stable as a result of having health and wider needs met
- CLA know where to go for health and wellbeing support, and are able to self-manage their health needs when they leave care (including physical health, sexual health, mental, emotional and behavioural health, oral health, diet, exercise, substances, sun safety, parenting skills, medicines and minor ailments, accident prevention, etc).

Priority Actions for 2014-16:

- **Ensure providers deliver 100% health assessments on time**
- **Care leavers have health passports**
- **CLA wellbeing improves**

6.4 Safe and stable placements: provide a choice of good quality placements that provide security, stability, safety and high standards of care

As corporate parents it is imperative that we commission the right accommodation and supporting services available so that outcomes for each child and young person are the best possible. Harrow's Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2014-15 forms part of the commissioning strategy that we are in the process of developing for our Children Looked After.

In the plan we set out the supporting legislation, needs of children looked after, and the resources at our disposal, and set out resulting actions for changing the internal and external market of services that we rely on.

Based on feedback from children and young people looked after, care leavers, and primary and secondary legislation, we have the following aims for our CLA services:

1. All children looked after are placed in appropriate placements with access to the support that they need, as identified in their care plan
2. Resources are available to respond to predicted demand for a range of needs and emergencies
3. Services are provided within the local authority area as far as possible or within the West London Alliance boundaries, except where this is not consistent with the welfare of a child, or is a specialist placement that it is not possible to commission locally
4. Children and Housing services have robust joint working protocols to meet the needs of those who are at risk of becoming looked after at the age of 16 and 17 as a result of homelessness
5. A sufficient range of accommodation and support packages are available to care leavers to facilitate their pathway plans and to ensure all transitions are undertaken in a planned and supportive manner. This includes a clear staying put policy to enable care leavers to remain with their foster carers up to the age of 25 if desired and appropriate
6. Services are of a high quality and deliver the specific outcomes identified in the care plans of children looked after
7. A range of placement choices are developed to meet the needs of the diverse Looked after children population in Harrow
8. Systems are in place to ensure careful matching of placements and to prevent disruption and to ensure placement stability

Placement stability is an incredibly important indicator of performance, as stability can be linked to permanence and better outcomes. Stability is therefore a good proxy-indicator for the positive outcomes we want to achieve.

Access to Resources Team

We have established an Access to Resources Team which commissions external placements and we aim to use only those providers who have an OFSTED judgement of good or outstanding. We are members of the West London Alliance project looking at shared commissioning of placements for children who are looked after. The Access to Resources Team has a responsibility to ensure careful matching of the placement to best meet the assessed needs of the child or young person. Strengths and difficulties questionnaires are completed and help identify where additional support may be required.

Fostering

We recognise that children do best in local placements where they can remain close to family, friends and their community, We have a robust targeted recruitment strategy to ensure we have a diverse range of foster carers to meet the needs of children looked after. Foster carers have access to a comprehensive training programme to ensure they have the skills to meet the needs of the young people they care for, and they are supported by the fostering social worker through robust supervision. Children and young people receive information about their placement in advance and are listened to if they have concerns at any time.

Residential Care

Harrow has low use of residential care and only considers this after alternatives have been tried or assessed as unviable. We aim to use only those providers who have an OFSTED judgement of good or outstanding.

The decision for a child or young person's placement is based on their need and tends to end with one of the following accommodation options and additional services for specific needs. Accommodation options include:

- Internal foster care
- External foster care
- Internal residential care
- External residential care
- Parent and child assessment
- Semi-independent and care leavers

Adoption

Harrow has invested in a domestic adoption partnership with Coram, a voluntary adoption agency. Three members of Coram staff are co-located with Children and Families social workers. This has enabled early identification and planning for adoption cases. The partnership with Harrow was established in 2006, and since that time there have been no disruptions of a Harrow child's placement, demonstrating the quality of preparation and support to adopters. Under the Harrow partnership agreement Coram also provides advice and consultation on permanence planning to Harrow Children and Families Directorate for children entering care. Following recent legislative and grant changes options for future provision are currently under consideration.

Special Guardianship

We have increased the number of children and young people who are subject to Special Guardianship Orders.

Family Group Conferences

Harrow purchases a Family Group Conference service from two providers. This provides families with the opportunity to find a solution to the difficulties within their family, and where the child is unable to remain in the care of their parents.

Connected Persons placements

We have a dedicated team responsible for assessing and supporting connected persons.

Priority Actions for 2014-16:

- **Increase capacity and placement choice; increase numbers of in-house foster carers including specialist placements for the children with the most complex needs**
- **Further reduce the number of placement moves**
- **Reduce the length of time children wait for adoptive placement**

6.5 Identity: looked after children know who they are and why they are looked after; feel valued and respected by others and their individual needs arising from gender, race, culture, disability, sexuality and religion are understood and met

Priority Actions for 2014-16

- **Continue to recruit foster carers that reflect the diversity of the local community**
- **Ensure all young people permanently fostered and adopted have lifestory books and later life letters**
- **Young people develop a positive identity, emotional resilience and self esteem**
- **The work force reflects the diversity of the local community**

6.6 Smooth transition to adulthood and independence: ensure children looked after and care leavers receive focused support at key transition points in their lives

The Leaving Care and Unaccompanied Asylum Children Team are responsible for those young people leaving care. They have developed a range of opportunities with partner agencies to support young people as they make the transition to adulthood.

Catch 22 Programme

The Catch 22 Programme was introduced 2 years ago as a follow on from the Lifeskills Folder. Catch 22 Folder was put together to give young people who are in or leaving care information and advice to help prepare them for adult life.

The experience of leaving care and starting life as an adult is different for everyone. It can be a time of joy, discovery, worry, excitement and many other emotions but one thing that applies to everyone is the fact that the more you know, the better prepared you are for whatever comes your way. The Catch 22 provides information around, health, EET, money management, accommodation, having you say, lifeskills and family relationships. Social Workers and carers work jointly with the young people to complete the folder which is introduced when the young people turn 18.

Lifeskills Workshop

The Lifeskills Workshop was introduced 6 years ago and has been running successfully with a group of 20 young people attending annually.

The Lifeskills Workshop brings together professionals from health looking at sexual health, drug and alcohol and mental health, housing and benefits and EET all providing information as well as young people undertaking practical skills such as cooking, budgeting, writing CV's and interview skills.

MyBank - Money works

MyBank is an independent training organisation focusing on money management. Mybank run a course for Harrow young people looked after. Twice a year the course runs over 2 days and the young people receive a Level 1 - Personal Money Management certificate. Money Works provides survival money management skills to young people in need.

Education, Employment and Training

The Leaving Care and Unaccompanied Asylum Children Team has a careers advisor based within the service. Their primary role is to work with those young people who are not in employment, education or training and to support other workers in engaging with this group of young people.

Not in Employment, Education or Training Panel [NEET]

The NEET Panel meets monthly and targets those young people not engaged in EET. It consists of a range of professionals from different disciplines to offer advice and guidance around engagement and access to a range of services. A robust action plan is then developed to actively engage with the young person.

Housing sub group

This has now run successfully for 12 months, to ensure maximum benefit for meeting quarterly, with representatives from Housing, LCT & UASC, Housing Benefit, Council Tax, and more recently Supporting People (Council Adults' Team). The housing department will continue to attend the Corporate Parenting Panel on a regular basis.

For 2014/15 nominations were agreed as 20 and eight young people have been successfully allocated a flat with 12 remaining. This is the highest number we have had remaining in October to due high shortages in housing stock.

Three young people will be made a direct offer and three more are waiting to be out forward with the remaining still bidding. Housing has suggested that young people consider bidding cross borough, due to the current shortages in Harrow. One young person has recently accepted a new build property in Finsbury Park.

A meeting was held with Supporting People to look at alternative options for instance, adding YMCA nominations which LCT and UASC currently do not have. This is being discussed and we hope that we will be given some nominations in the short term. Another option which may have to be considered is young people being supported through the private sector and renting a shared property. Young people are reluctant to do this but with the current housing stock situation they may have no option. This is something that may have to be included in the next Charter Review next year.

All young people that have been put forward have successfully claimed housing benefit and there have been no issues to date. This can be seen as an important improvement towards independence.

Currently we have seven young people working with MST who are supporting the young people to manage their tenancies. MST are at full capacity and, along with the other boroughs they work with, we are exploring alternative options with Supporting People.

Housing Officers will attend the Corporate Parenting Panel to ensure regular updates are provided to Councillors

Leaving Care Charter

The Leaving Care Charter was recently re-launched and outlines the Local Authority's commitment to Care leavers and specific areas of support, financial, practical and emotional.

PAFT (Parents as first Teachers) Programme

The Family Centre PAFT programme, designed to work with teenage parents, has developed a dedicated course for care leavers. The aims of the course are to increase parent knowledge of early childhood development, improve parenting practice, provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues and prevent child abuse and neglect and to increase children's school readiness and school success.

Clinic in a box

Working in partnership with the sexual health nurse we offer advice and information in respect of sexual health. There is a drop-in service and she attends the lifeskills course annually.

Leaving Care Forum (see 6.2 earlier)

Staying Put policy

Lead worker NEET

Increased Leaving Care grant made by the Council to support the transition

Priority Actions for 2014-16

- **To strengthen the Children in Care Council 'Beyond Limits' through increases participation of children looked after and care leavers**
- **Ensure that the Corporate Parenting Panel receives regular feedback from children looked after and takes any necessary action arising from that feedback**
- **Expand participation engagement with CLA placed out of borough**
- **Increase response rates through refreshed feedback options for CLA reviews and CP Conferences**
- **Advocacy and Independent Visitor Services are used by children and young people to ensure their voices are heard**

- **Ensure providers deliver 100% health assessments on time**
- **Care leavers have health passports**
- **CLA wellbeing improves**

- **Increase capacity and placement choice; increase numbers of in-house foster carers including specialist placements for the children with the most complex needs**
- **Further reduce the number of placement moves**
- **Reduce the length of time children wait for adoptive placement**
- **Continue to recruit foster carers that reflect the diversity of the local community**
- **Ensure all young people permanently fostered and adopted have lifestory books and later life letters**

- **Young people develop a positive identity, emotional resilience and self esteem**
- **The workforce reflects the diversity of the local community**
- **Improve opportunities for care leavers to access education ,employment or specially trained apprenticeships**

Appendix A: Corporate Parenting Pledge⁸ to Looked After Children

For a better future

Harrow Council provides care and support to those children and young people who, for whatever reason, cannot live with their birth family. For some this may be a short time and for others it may be longer. However long or whether you live with foster carers, residential care, adoptive parents or another member of your family we are committed to giving you the best start in life possible - helping you to be the best that you can be.

The Local Authority is your corporate parent - which simply means trying to do everything that a good parent does throughout your time in our care. Our commitment to you is made by the politicians, who represent the community in the running of the council, all directors and senior managers and our staff, who provide care and support for you.

Children and young people who are in our care or who have been in our care in the recent past have told us what kind of good care and support they need to be the best they can be. We have listened to this and the commitments we make in this children's pledge reflect this.

Our pledge

We pledge to work together to provide you the best possible care and support to help you be the best you can be in your life - now and in the future. To do this we will:

1. **Provide you with a safe home to live where you feel happy and taken care of.** This means that wherever possible you will have a choice about where you live and that you will not be moved from a settled home unless absolutely necessary, or if it is deemed to be in your best interests.
2. **Provide you with the support you need to do well in education.** This means that we will make sure you have the opportunity to go to a school where you can flourish, get the support outside of school to do well in exams and have access to college and university.
3. **Listen to you about things in your own life and about the care that you receive from us.** This means that we will always make sure that you are involved in decisions that are made about your own life and that we find ways to help you tell us your views if you find this difficult. We will also make sure that there are opportunities to tell us what you think about the care that you receive and that if you have a complaint you get the help to get heard.
4. **Be honest with you about things that have happened in your life and the decisions that are made about your care.** We know that at times it is difficult to understand what has happened to you and why certain decisions are made about your care. We can't promise that you will always agree with these decisions. But, we will always be honest with you about the reasons for these decisions and, where possible, what has happened in your life.
5. **Help you to develop good relationships with the people that you care for and the people in your life that are most important to you.** This means that, as far as possible, we will provide you with opportunities to see those people that are important to you in your life. We will help you to develop and maintain relationships and friendships with the people that provide care and support for you and other children and young people.
6. **Provide you with support and opportunities to enjoy your life and have interests and hobbies of your own.** This means that we will make sure you have information and access to opportunities and activities outside of education that you enjoy.
7. **Provide you with the support you need when you leave care to become independent and be the best you can be in adult life.** This means that we will make sure that you have choices about how and when you leave care and that we will make

⁸ http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200161/children_looked_after/487/harrow_pledge/2

sure we support you to be prepared for independence and have the help you will need to make independence work when you leave care.

We make these pledges to you and will do our best to always fulfil each one. There are many teams involved in helping make these pledges happen - from Children's Services to Housing and Health. We will make sure that we work together to do this.

Harrow Council - Corporate Parenting Panel

The Harrow Pledge is endorsed by the Corporate Parenting panel on behalf of the Council.

All policy and procedures relating to children looked after are overseen by the Corporate Parenting panel.

Members and senior officers from the Council meet to discuss the performance, service delivery and aspirations for the Council in respect of Children Looked After and young people leaving care. Beyond Limits representatives also attend the Corporate Parenting panel.

This panel is lead by members to challenge, scrutinise and support the services for children looked after.

Appendix B: Legal duties and responsibilities

The Children Act 1989 sets out the local authority's legal duties and responsibilities which underpin service provision for looked after children, young people and care leavers. Although the term corporate parenting is not specifically mentioned in the Children Act 1989 it is a term that has been widely adopted and is included in the recent guidance associated with the Act.

Subsequent legislation, regulations and government advice has extended and strengthened the obligations of local authorities towards looked after children, including:-

- 1998 letter from the Secretary of State for Health, Frank Dobson regarding councilors roles and responsibilities toward looked after children
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 - extended the types of service and upper age limit of young people the local authority are responsible for as a corporate parent
- Subsequent government guidance issued for councilors has reiterated the role that they should play in being an effective corporate parent for looked after children in their care. The "If this were my child" (DfES 2003) guidance posed the benchmark question to develop the necessary mind set for achieving high quality outcomes for looked after children. This established a clear expectation that once a child becomes looked after all councilors and officers of the council need to be concerned about them 'as if they were their own children'.
- Children Act 2004 - contains a statutory requirement for local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children and emphasizes the role of collaborative service agreements to achieve the right type of service provision
- Children & Young People Act 2008 - reinforced the message that all councils, and particularly elected members, hold responsibility for ensuring good outcomes for looked after children
- April 2011, further statutory guidance was introduced to clarify the local authority's responsibilities for looked after children. The revised statutory guidance is presented as a suite of documents as follows;
 - Care Planning, Placement & Care reviews
 - Planning Transitions to Adulthood for Care Leavers
 - Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Handbook
 - Sufficiency - securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children
 - Short Breaks
- November 2011 Family Justice Review Panel report taken forward in the Children and Families Bill: the commitment to a 26 week time limit when courts consider a child should be taken into care; virtual school head in every local authority
- July 2013 revised statutory guidance on adoption published
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children* April 2013
- From Sept 2013 all young people must remain in education or training until the end of the academic year they turn 17.

Appendix C: Detailed Health outcomes

The CLA health outcomes service shall be available to:

- Children within the children in need and child protection system who are accommodated on section 20 of the Children Act 1989
- Children Looked After who are accommodated under section 31 (Care Orders) and 38 (Interim Care Orders) of the Children Act 1989
- Children looked after who are in pre-adoption placements and transition planning for those moving to post adoption placements
- Children looked after with special guardianship orders
- Children who are unaccompanied asylum seeking minors and are in the care of the Local Authority
- Children placed in short term care
- Young people up to 25 years who are within the leaving care team plus transition planning
- All carers and professionals who relate to the above and are involved in their care planning
- Statutory and voluntary agencies who are involved in care planning.

Service scope includes the following:

- Responsibility for health and wellbeing outcomes for CLA
- Monitoring of health and wellbeing outcomes for CLA and tracking of assessments
- Identified health lead professional for each child which may be the Health Visitor, Community Children's Nurse or school nurse
- Assessment of CLA health including all initial and review health assessments except where already a key health worker has built a relationship with the child / young person – this would be assessed on an individual basis
- Health care plans and health passports for care leavers
- Advisory and signposting of support for CLA and care leavers
- Participation in professional meetings and identification of suitable care placements, including through attending fostering panels and adoption panels
- Provision of reports to panels and court proceedings
- Training for Council, NHS, Schools, carers, parents and other partners in support of the Designated Professional
- Sharing information and support to Council, NHS, Schools, carers, parents and other partners as appropriate
- Co-ordination of Council, NHS, School, other partner and Community resources to improve CLA health and wellbeing outcomes
- Supporting CLA and carers to access non-medical specialised services when needed through referral and care pathway routes
- Support to CQC, Ofsted and other inspections as and when required.

The same monitoring, outcome and quality requirements will apply regardless of geographical location of CLA. Arrangements with other providers of assessments and support will be approved by the Commissioner and Designated Nurse.

The CLA health outcomes service may also be requested to support Children Looked After who are placed within Harrow by other authorities. In the event that the service Provider chooses to provide services for non-Harrow CLA it must recharge the originating CCG accordingly, record this activity separately and report to the Commissioner and Designated

Nurse. The recharge to the originating CCG will be completed by the Designated Nurse for CLA once the details have been shared by the CLA Service.

Both initial and review health assessments shall:

- Identify the health needs of the child
- Ensure the voice of the child is recorded and the assessment is co-produced
- Establish health history and identify gaps in routine child health surveillance
- Request the health information from local health providers and specialist services to ensure a full and accurate overview of the child health needs
- Identify family health history
- Promote optimal health and address areas of unmet health needs
- Formulate a strategy and action plan for meeting health needs
- Address the needs of the child in the placement so that the carer is empowered and feels confident to provide for the support and health care needs of their child, at the same time as feeling that their own needs are also being supported.

The following are actions, to be undertaken, as a result of each high quality health assessment:

- Clear identification of the level of unidentified health needs and how to address these
- Agreement with the child on how, where and when and by whom professional support shall be provided
- Agreement with the child on how, when and by whom their development shall be monitored
- Identify gaps in service provision and escalate to Senior Managers and the Designated Nurse and Commissioner
- Identify key health issues and how these shall be addressed
- Liaise with partner agencies including CAMHS, substance misuse services, sexual health agencies, leisure services, schools to ensure needs are addressed
- A health care plan for every child in care including details of how progress shall be monitored.

The Provider working closely with social care is responsible for following up health assessments and health care plans with the child, and shall maintain contact with the child throughout the year to offer support and refer to other services as appropriate. Tracking of the child shall be at a level equivalent to their needs and requirements.

Plans will be co-produced with children, their carers and where appropriate parents to ensure all stakeholders are contributing to the health and wellbeing outcomes of the child.

Health plans shall address all health and wellbeing outcomes and include, as a minimum:

- Reflect the voice of the child
- Clear identification of overall objectives
- Named professional responsible for actions
- Timescales for delivery
- Clarify monitoring arrangements

We will support the development of Health passports working closely with the Local authority, GP's and Young People. Health passports shall address all health and wellbeing outcomes and where possible include:

- NHS number
- Blood group
- Birth information
- Growth Statistics and Percentiles
- Hearing Function Information
- Medical history
- Family Health History

- Regular medication
- Contact details for GP, dentist, optician and other health professionals,
- Immunisation records
- Eye Test Results / Prescriptions
- Information promoting healthy and active lifestyles
- Organ donation register information if deemed appropriate

Resources to engage include, but are not limited to:

- Children Looked After
- Carers and parents
- Community resources
- Health Visiting
- School Nursing
- Public Health
- GPs
- CAMHS
- Harrow Children & Families
- Virtual Heads
- Independent Visitors
- Dentistry
- Child Development teams
- Community Children's Nursing teams
- Secondary care providers
- Specialist / tertiary services e.g., paediatric, stoma, craniofacial or chronic skin disease
- Schools (including team around the school)
- Children's Centres
- Dietetics
- Sexual Health Services including GUM
- Local services to where children and young people are placed
- Early Intervention Service
- COMPASS and Each
- Police services
- Harrow Youth Offending Team
- Harrow CCG
- Voluntary and community organisations
- Children with Disabilities Team