

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019 to 2021

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Appendix The corporate parenting pledge

‘Elected Members of the Corporate Parenting panel demonstrate a clear commitment to improving the life chances of children looked after. They have oversight of detailed performance information and analysis, with a range of professionals presenting reports. This helps them to clarify, challenge and question activity. Mandatory training enhances their understanding. The corporate parenting strategy is detailed and it sets clear priorities and the areas for improvement’

1. “Introduction

Harrow Council is committed to ensure that all directorates offer support and commitment to Looked After Children and Care Leavers and understands that all councillors and officers are corporate parents

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. Parental responsibility for looked after children is the responsibility of the whole council, not just children services. In addition the Local Authority ensures it enrolls the support of its partner agencies in helping them to fulfil their obligations in respect of their corporate parenting responsibilities for children looked after.

Corporate parenting relates to all children looked after by the authority, wherever they are placed, including young people receiving leaving care services up to 25 years of age.

As Corporate Parents the Council is committed to the same standards of care as would a ‘reasonable parent’.. 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 can 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.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 outlines 7 Corporate Parenting principles

- a) To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- b) To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings

- c) To take into account the views wishes and feelings of those young people
- d) To help those children and young people gain access to , and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- e) To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- f) For those children and young people to be safe , and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- g) To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and Independent living

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 which has provided a celebration for achievements ,progress and activities
- Annual foster carer celebration and awards evening which acknowledges the positive contribution that foster carers make to the lives and outcomes for children looked after
- 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
- Care Leavers claim their entitlement to Housing Benefit and are provided council tax relief
- A Care Leavers Charter and local Offer has been developed with young people to ensure appropriate support is available as they transition into adulthood.
- Full engagement with 2 year old, and 3 and 4 year old nursery offers
- Virtual School promotion of pupil premium funding use and monitoring for impact
- Increase in the number of care leavers at university

- Improved exam results and education achievement

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 our priority is to secure the very best care and opportunities for them. To achieve this we 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 are cared about, not just cared for”.

The Corporate Parenting Panel¹, 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 actions 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. The Corporate parenting panel can recommend that a strategy is referred to cabinet for further recommendation and then approval by Council. Agendas, reports and minutes are published on the council website.

All councillors are corporate parents. Members’ induction is mandatory with training provided for all councillors at least annually.

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

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 Strategy²
Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report –
Adoption and Fostering Panel Annual report
Case Tracking Annual Report

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

Virtual Head teacher Annual Report
Virtual School Development Plan
Not in employment, education or training [NEETs] Care Leavers - twice yearly reports

Health including dental checks

¹<http://www.harrow.gov.uk/www2/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=788> Purpose, role & membership

² See priority 6.4

Regular Provider reports

Participation

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

Crime: youth offending/re-offending

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

Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy

Youth Justice Plan

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 welfare and success 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

Harrow has developed a robust Placement Sufficiency Strategy which outlines the range of

placement options and interventions including fostering, family and friends care, residential care and a range of semi-independent provisions.

Harrow is also working with other boroughs within the West London Alliance to ensure greater placement choice and value for money across West London. This includes a framework for semi Independent provision.

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 involves ensuring regular medical, dental checks and eye tests and being concerned and alert to children's wellbeing both physical and emotional and responding in a timely and appropriately manner. There is a strong commissioned CLA Health service with a lead nurse professional and designated doctor which has ensured the promotion and support of the health needs of Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

5.5 Jobs, apprenticeships and work experience

Harrow 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 will 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

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 which is outlined and evidenced in the Youth Justice and VVE strategies..

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 School³ is to raise the attainment and outcomes of Harrow's Children Looked After⁴(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. 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 designated teachers from schools in Harrow.

Alternative education provision

- Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and Pathway plans more outcome focused and specific.
- 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.

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.

Ofsted January 2017 'Harrow Children looked after benefit from an impressive range of creative and innovative participation and engagement opportunities, and an active Children in Care Council, Beyond Limits'

Harrow's **Participation Strategy**⁵ 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.

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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 Limits⁶”

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, 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.

All councillors in the Corporate Parenting Panel are regularly invited to these meetings and activities.

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 event on 23rd October 2019 was a huge success with Children Looked After and Care Leavers enjoying the recognition of their progress and challenges

Leaving Care Charter –

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

The Care Leavers Local Offer

The 2017 Children and Social Work Act outlined a duty for each local authority to publish a local offer for Care Leavers. Harrows local offer is on the council website and has been consulted on and promoted with our Care Leavers.

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.

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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.

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.
- Harrow and the CCG have jointly commissioned the CLA Health service from CNWL which has seen a positive increase in the health outcomes for Looked After Childrens. This service has been extended for a further 2 years
- Harrow and the CCG have also commissioned Barnardos to provide services for the emotional needs of children and young people with Looked After children being a priority group.
- 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).
- Harrow Council has a strong commitment to addressing recent challenges of increased knife crime and gang violence. Through Safer Harrow, the Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation and Youth Justice Strategies it has developed a comprehensive and robust approach in partnership with other key agencies in the local area.

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 forms part of the commissioning strategy that we are in the process of developing for our Children Looked After.

Harrow Ofsted report January 2017 'The sufficiency Strategy is clear and coherent with relevant priorities linked to present and future need. Appropriate commissioning arrangements are in place to ensure that there is a range of placements to meet the needs of children looked after.'

In the strategy 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 is the lead local authority in the Regional Adoption Agency – Ambitious for Adoption. This builds on the success of our long standing adoption partnership with Coram, a voluntary adoption agency. Three members of Coram staff will continue to be co-located with Children and Families social workers to ensure our good practice and strong adoption outcomes continue

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

Our staff and managers are committed to the following

- 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
- Ensure young people develop a positive identity, emotional resilience and self esteem
- Ensure 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.

Independent Skills

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.

Life skills 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.

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.

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.

Sexual Health Outreach service

- The new Young People's Outreach Service (delivered by LNWHT and subcontracted to Brook) commenced in September 2017 and has prioritised schools and community groups in wards with the lowest wellbeing indicators and high school absences - key indicators for poor sexual health outcomes. The Service offer includes:
 - education and training for health professionals i.e. confidence and resources needed to delivery high quality, holistic sex and relationships education to young people
 - 'Traffic Light' training for Harrow Social Workers
 - educational work in schools and colleges (including college fairs) with a consistent approach to assessment, pathways and messages promoting aged appropriate education.
 - virtual tour of local sexual health clinic i.e. for use in PSHE lessons or assemblies or in community workshops about healthy relationships and reducing risk taking behaviours
 - specific outreach and group/1:1 engagement programmes to reach vulnerable and high risk young people e.g.
 - Looked after Children
 - young people's excluded from mainstream education
 - young people with a learning disability

Harrow's Sexual Health Clinic [Caryl Thomas Clinic Harrow](#) has an allocated afternoon each week for 'Walk-in' and appointments for people age 25 and under only

L.B.. Harrow is also signed up to the 'C-Card Scheme' (aimed at 13-24 year olds) which is made up of a collection of London Boroughs who are working in partnership to provide a consistent approach to condom distribution across London. The C-Card is a small card that fits into a pocket, wallet or purse and enables the young person to access a free supply of condoms on a weekly basis from any outlet within the scheme. These locations display a window sticker of the Come Correct logo. A system called Therapy Audit (TACCARD) is used to register the young person and then to record subsequent visits. Users require Unique login credentials and training to provide this service.

Appendix A: Corporate Parenting Pledge⁷ 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 http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200161/children_look_after/487/harrow_pledge/2

- 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 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.