

# Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2022 -2025

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## 1 Introduction

Whether you are a young person in care, or left care, parent, foster carer, guardian; an elected local member of your council or social worker, we all have the best of intentions for children and young people who experience care.

Our ambition is for you all to receive the best possible care within a setting that provides stability and enables you to maintain wellbeing, make a successful transition to adulthood and independence, whilst achieving your aspirations.

Recent events have proved to be a long and defining challenge for all of us at every turn. However, for you as young people experiencing care and those leaving care, the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic has been significant and long lasting.

In order to restore the level of progress, we all want for you as children in care and those leaving care, particularly in terms of health and education outcomes; permanence of placements; to keep you safe from all forms of harm and to be able to voice your experiences and concerns on your terms; to meet your needs and for you to become active citizens in sustainable local communities, we have developed the Barnsley Children in Care Strategy. This outlines our vision on how we will propose to deliver an outstanding level of practice and provision to you all.

We share a strong responsibility, and the objectives and priorities of our new Strategy will help to promote resilience, particularly to the rising costs of living and improve your life chances.as part of building social capital, re-shaping our communities and *“building back better”*

We commend the new Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy to you all as an integral part of our ambition to commission and provide outstanding services for children and young people in care and those leaving care in Barnsley.



.....

(Councillor Trevor Cave: Cabinet Spokesperson (Children’s Services) Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council



Sophie Wales

.....  
(Sophie Wales: Interim Executive Director (Children's Services))

## 2 Strategic Vision

As we approach 2030, our overall vision for Barnsley is for it to become a *“Place of Possibilities”* This means a place in which all people can live in good health, feel protected and to go on and achieve their potential through quality education institutions, transport and connectivity, access to skills and sustainable employment.

Our Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy forms part of this narrative, particularly through the following:

- *A Healthier Barnsley* – in which (a) everyone is able to enjoy their lives in good physical and mental health (b) where fewer people experience poverty and (c) people can access the right support at the right time and place
- *A Learning Barnsley* – where all children and young people can aim high and achieve their full potential with more people being able to access higher education and higher-level skills than ever before

At the heart of our service delivery to all young people who are cared for by Barnsley and to you as our care leavers who have been looked after previously is our commitment to the 7 principles of corporate parenting as outlined in the Statutory guidance published in February 2018 below:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings

- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- 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
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work

### **3. Expectations for our children in care**

We thank you all for providing us with your 'expectations' so we can ensure we are doing what you say and that we can monitor we are doing it well. We will make sure you get a good education, help you to enjoy life and prepare you for the future. The 6 expectations as below are our agreed joint 'expectations'.

#### **a) We will look after you in a safe and caring home**

We will:

- help you to live in a safe place, where you'll be cared for
- only move you if we have to
- help you to keep things that are important to you
- listen to you when you have any concerns
- find you a loving home as quickly as possible, that can and will last until you're ready to leave care

#### **b) We will promote, support and respect your identity**

We will:

- respect your right to privacy
- only share information with people that need to know as and when they need it
- help you as you grow up and provide you with a life story book
- tell you when you're doing well
- give you extra help if you need it
- show you how proud we are of you
- recognise your rights in relation to disability, sexuality and race
- support your right to both follow your culture and religion if that is your wish
- recognise that you need to be seen as individuals' worth of respect
- help you to discover your sense of who you are
- help you to stay in touch with your family if this is what you want
- support and encourage you to get involved in your community through volunteering work and helping others if you want to

**c) We will make sure you get a good education**

We will:

- keep you safe in school, and make sure that you feel safe
- make sure you know where to go in school to get support
- make sure you don't have to change school wherever possible, especially in years 10 and 11
- make sure you're given extra support within school when you need it
- support you to join in with activities in school and after school
- be aware that if you don't have good mental health this could affect your education
- make sure that if you're a school-age child you have access to a computer or device and the internet where you live
- support you whilst you're in further education and training beyond 16, including going to college and university, and help you plan for the future
- celebrate and promote your achievements

**d) We will support you to be healthy**

We will:

- make sure that you're registered with a GP and dentist
- make sure that all hospital, GP and dental appointments are kept and that you're supported to attend them
- make sure you don't miss out on things like football, dancing, swimming and going on holiday
- help you to eat healthily, play outside, and enjoy exercise
- help you to feel happy and good about yourself
- recognise that relationships are critically important to you
- help you when you're doing well or if you're struggling

We know that mental health and wellbeing are one of your biggest worries and the most important and urgent things that we have to improve.

**e) We will prepare you for the future**

We will:

- make sure you have a name personal advisor
- make sure you've got a bank account, birth certificate, passport and National Insurance number soon after your 16th birthday
- help you to fill out forms with other agencies, such as housing
- prepare you with living skills such as cooking, washing, ironing, cleaning and money management
- help you to develop your confidence and social skills

- help you with interviews
- make sure you don't pay council tax if you live in Barnsley
- let you know ways to contact your worker and if you leave a message for them that someone will get back to you as soon as possible

**f) We will involve you in making it happen**

We will:

- listen to you and your views
- act on what you say and tell you what we've done and when we've done it
- ensure that you're aware of your legal rights and entitlements
- always speak to you in words you understand
- always be honest
- always believe in you and never give up
- You have the right to say how you feel about your life.
- You'll always be listened to when we make decision about your life.

**4. Key indicators that tell us what we are doing is what children and care leavers expect us to do and what we need to do better:**

	<b>18/19 Outturn</b>	<b>19/20 Outturn</b>	<b>20/21 Outturn</b>	<b>21/22 Outturn</b>	<b>20/21 Stat. Neighbours</b>	<b>20/21 National</b>
Care Leavers - Percentage in Education, Training and/or Employment	62.5%	65.6%	71.2%	68.2%	50.1%	52.0%
Care Leavers - Percentage in Suitable Accommodation	95.4%	95.3%	90.9%	93.9%	91.0%	88.0%
Timeliness of Visits to Care Leavers (Percentage of Visits within 8 weeks)	78.4%	91.6%	98.7%	99.5%	N/A	N/A



	<b>18/19 Outturn</b>	<b>19/20 Outturn</b>	<b>20/21 Outturn</b>	<b>21/22 Outturn</b>	<b>20/21 Stat. Neighbours</b>	<b>20/21 National</b>
LAC Health Assessment Timeliness	95.7%	99.0%	100.0%	92.7%	92.7%	91.0%
LAC Dental Assessment Timeliness	99.5%	99.0%	33.0%	83.9%	33.9%	40.0%
LAC Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire	76.7%	73.9%	96.9%	71.6%	82.2%	80.0%
LAC Reviews within timescales	98.5%	99.0%	99.4%	98.3%	N/A	N/A
LAC Visits Timeliness	98.8%	98.9%	99.8%	97.4%	N/A	N/A
Personal Education Plans (PEPs)	100.0%	99.5%	99.5%	98.2%	N/A	N/A
Termly Personal Education Plans (TPEPs)	98.0%	95.7%	99.0%	98.2%	N/A	N/A

	<b>18/19 Outturn</b>	<b>19/20 Outturn</b>	<b>20/21 Outturn</b>	<b>21/22 Outturn</b>	<b>20/21 Stat. Neighbours</b>	<b>20/21 National</b>
LAC Placement Stability: Stable Placement 2.5yrs+	64.1%	59.4%	67.3%	69.7%	68.3%	70.0%
LAC Placement Stability: 3+ Placement Moves	11.0%	7.0%	4.5%	10.6%	8.3%	9.0%



	18/19 Outturn	19/20 Outturn	20/21 Outturn	21/22 Outturn	18/19 Stat. Neighbours	18/19 National
LAC Education: Attendance (Primary & Secondary)	95.5%	95.8%	N/A	93.5%	96.1%	95.7%

## 5. What do we need to do more of and be better?

We want to increase our numbers of foster carers so we can ensure all our children are placed with Barnsley foster carers. We have a robust marketing and communications strategy for 2022/23 to help us to do this.

We have a target to recruit 23 new carers in 2022/23 and we are making excellent progress with 2 newly approved and 14 planned to fostering panel in the first half year already. As part of the recruitment strategy, we are targeting carers for all fostering schemes. This year we also want to invite you to be more involved in our recruitment.

We are seeing a slight improvement in children experiencing stability in long term care but we need to see an improvement on the number of placement moves that sometimes you as children in care experience. With additional carers we are hopeful this will improve as we will have more choice and capacity.

We have an emotional health and wellbeing support worker working with carers and some of you young people, which should positively impact on placement stability. We want to expand on our resource by considering more therapeutically trained practitioners to support consultations and to enable reflective team discussions with social workers, residential staff and carers in how to best meet your needs.

We have a new stability pathway and a new weekly Vulnerable Placement Panel. Although this is still in its infancy, we believe this new development is contributing to this improvement.

We currently have 19 young people in external residential provision. We don't want young people placed in external residential homes. We want you to be local to Barnsley when it is appropriate to do so and is in keeping with your wishes.

Some of the above will be achieved by opening a new residential home. This has had some significant delay in identifying a suitable property, but it is hoped this will be achieved in 2022/23. We want you to help us develop this plan this year and shape the service.

We want to reduce our use of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) carers by 8 in 2022/23. We have seen a significant reduction from September to March but we want to see this trend continue with a further reduction as we increase our inhouse capacity so we can support you to stay local, in communities that are familiar to you.

Some of you may have been involved in our annual takeover day. Mentors have now been recruited and we will be communicating with you all who are interested in being matched. This scheme will give you an opportunity to share personally your career ambitions and aspirations with suitably experienced mentors.

We need to build on our ongoing success with regard to the % of Care Leavers 19-21 in Education, Training and Employment (ETE). We have over the last few years met our annual target of 65% and this year our reported out turn for 21/22 was 68.2%. Our performance compares favourably with statistical neighbours and national averages. In 22/23 we have raised our performance target to 68%.

We want to progress a new care leavers hub for you at Commerce House. This will support more engagement for you and staff will always be available to see you. This central resource we think will be really welcomed as a friendly venue and we can also use it for your Care4Us Council meetings and other work streams.

## **6. Care4Us Council**

We know we need to increase membership and representation of children in care and care leavers on the Care4Us Council, the new youth Voice and Participation Coordinator, support worker and existing cohort are planning on developing an ongoing recruitment and training programme.

You who are members of the Care4Us Council will support us to develop a dynamic workplan which captures the foreseen annual workstreams e.g., Takeover Day, celebration events and allows for ongoing and joint work with other Youth Voice Forums.

We want you all to promote these expectations on behalf of all Barnsley's Children & Young People and those leaving care. We want to ensure they stay true to our intentions, and we will support a rolling review of the outcomes including getting your feedback through the use of a smart survey, Facebook poll's, user satisfaction and review meetings.

The Care4Us Council will promote The Local Offer for Barnsley's Care Leavers, its purpose and its intentions and support a rolling review of the outcomes for you young People who have left our care. We will do this through the use of a smart survey, Facebook poll's, user satisfaction and review meetings.

We also want to progress and establish drop ins for you all with the relevant secondary schools/academies to ensure we are reaching out further to all young people in care.

We know we need a succession plan for the future of the Care4Us council members, specifically we want to expand the service to ensure we are also incorporating and ensuring there is representation and voice of our younger children.

We want to further build relationships with and support carers in enabling you all to participate by attending Foster Carer Forums regularly. We also want to progress more participation and attendance at foster carers association meetings, support groups events and activities to build relationships and to ensure we are promoting youth voice and participation activity

We will build on existing links with Barnsley Youth Council and promote joint work wherever possible to ensure that your voice is truly represented in decision making processes across the Childrens partnership.

## **7. Arrangements for Monitoring and Review**

This is a 3-year strategy and will be reviewed and refreshed annually to ensure the strategy remains effective by evidencing progress against 'What do we need to do more of and be better'.

You as children in care and our care leavers will also be consulted on in relation to any reviews and will have ongoing opportunities to monitor how we are achieving 'what we need to do more of and be better'.

The outcomes relating to the strategy will also be regularly reported to senior leaders, elected members and to the Corporate Parenting Panel. Relevant service areas have performance indicators which measure how well we are achieving our strategic aims for you, and these are closely monitored and tracked at different levels within our service areas.

We want to now create an action plan from this strategy with you so we can ensure we are tracking all our developments. We will introduce a new Corporate Parenting subgroup, chaired by the head of service for children in care.

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