

Strategic Plan for Looked After Children: North Tyneside's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2016-2019

1. Our commitment

This document sets out North Tyneside Council's vision and plans for fulfilling its moral and legal responsibilities as corporate parent for all looked after children and care leavers in North Tyneside.

It reaffirms our commitment, together with that of our partners, to act for each of our children in the same way as any responsible parent would. We will ensure that when a child's parents or family cannot provide appropriate care for them, and the child becomes looked after by us, they are cared about, not just cared for. That, in us, they have someone who: looks out for them; ensures that their wishes are heard and their needs acted upon; speaks out for them if necessary; offers encouragement and praise; and has ambitions for them.

Every child and every responsible parent wants to see children: have access to the same rights as their peers; flourish with good health; be safe and happy; do well at school; enjoy good relationships; have a stable home; make the most of leisure opportunities and interests; and grow towards adulthood equipped to lead independent lives, take up learning opportunities, have good careers and be financially secure. These are the goals our children, and we as corporate parents, share and they are reflected in our key strategic plans - the Our North Tyneside Plan 2016-2019 and North Tyneside's Children and Young People Plan 2014-2018.

However we know that most children and young people in care will have experienced some form of disadvantage in their lives prior to becoming looked after and that they face particular challenges because of their needs or circumstances. This is evidenced by the continuing gap between the quality of their lives and those of other children in North Tyneside; for example in terms of educational attainment, and health, as explored in sections 3.1 and 3.3.

Therefore, as corporate parents, we will aim to ensure our children receive the care, support and opportunities they need to reach their full potential. We will do this by:

- listening to and respecting them
- championing their rights
- supporting the practitioners working with them to help improve their opportunities and life chances
- narrowing the gap between them and their peers.

2. Strategy Structure

The document begins by highlighting the drivers that shape the strategy and identified the overarching outcomes the Authority is seeking to achieve with our children. The drivers include national legislation and guidance; the local policy context as shaped by the Our North Tyneside Plan and Target Operating Model; the

key characteristics of our looked after children; how we listen and respond to the views, experiences and needs of our children; and the costs of the service.

Each outcome is then considered and the following information identified:

- how the outcome relates to our Promise to Children in Care and Care Leavers in North Tyneside
- what our responsibilities are as Corporate Parents
- the key issues identified from national research on the views and experiences of looked after children, young people and care leavers; local information drawn from engagement with our children and performance and profiling data; and the views of our children
- the outcome statements that underpin each outcome
- the priorities that the strategy's rolling annual action plan will address in 2016/17.

The document concludes with an overview of how the strategy will be delivered using the accompanying action plan.

3. National and local drivers

This strategy has been shaped by what we know about our children and what they tell us about their lives and ambitions, but also by national legislation, statutory guidance and the local policy context.

3.1 Legislation and guidance

The **Children Act** (1989) first gave local authorities and their partners the responsibility of being corporate parents and of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of each child they look after.

Since 1989 the government's interest in and concern for looked after children and care leavers has resulted in a raft of legislation and guidance seeking to improve and extend responsibility for the care and support for these children and young people. Key legislation has included:

- The **Children (Leaving Care) Act** (2000). By extending local authorities' responsibility to young people leaving care, it recognised that parental support does not come to an abrupt end at the age of 16. It requires local authorities to: plan every looked after young person's transition to adulthood; ensure they do not leave the local authority's care until they are prepared and ready to; and provide ongoing advice and (financial) assistance for as long as care leavers continue in further or higher education.
- The **Children Act** (2004) introduced a duty on local authorities and partners to co-operate to promote the wellbeing and safety of children. It also gave local authorities the duty to promote the educational achievement of looked after children.
- The **Children and Young Persons Act** (2008) first set out the government's ambition to improve outcomes for all children and young people in the care system under the following themes: corporate parenting, family and parenting

support, care placements, first class education, promoting health and well being, and transition to adulthood. It also required local authorities to take steps to secure sufficient suitable accommodation for looked after children; strengthened the care planning process and the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer in monitoring the plan; and required the development of children's health and education plans.

- **Statutory Guidance: Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children** (2010) requires local authorities to develop a plan to secure sufficient accommodation for looked after children by working in partnership with other agencies. However the requirement is not just about accommodation and placements, but also securing a 'diverse range of universal, targeted and specialist services working together to meet children's needs'. It applies not only to looked after children, but also those on the edge of care and at risk of custody.
- The **Adoption Action Plan – Tackling Delay** (2012) sets out a range of proposals to help more children find stable, loving and permanent homes more quickly. While in 2013 **Statutory Foster Care Guidance** was introduced to speed up the fostering process and give foster carers more say in the care of children in their care.
- **Children and Families Act** (2014): aims to increase the number of adoptions and reduce delays in matching; gives the Department for Education the power to require local authorities to outsource adopter recruitment; requires local authorities to provide advice, support and assistance to young people and families in Staying Put arrangements; lays the foundations for new regulations and inspections for children's homes; creates education, health and care plans to replace Statements of Educational Needs backed by a 'local offer' to explain what support is available.
- **NICE Guideline on children's attachment** (2015): provides advice on the identification, assessment and treatment of attachment difficulties in children and young people up to the age of 17 who are adopted from care, in special guardianship, looked after or on the edge of care.

The above also informs Ofsted's inspection framework against which the quality and effectiveness of the local authority's care and support for looked after children and care leavers is assessed.

3.2 Local policy context

The **Our North Tyneside Plan** (ONT) provides the Council's policy framework; it not only acts as the Council Plan, but also North Tyneside Strategic Partnership's (NTSP) Sustainable Community Strategy. Under its People Theme the plan seeks to achieve the following outcomes for all of our residents including our children; that they will be:

- listened to, and involved by responsive, enabling services
- ready for school
- ready for work and life

- healthy and well
- cared for and safeguarded if they become vulnerable.

While under its Places Theme, the borough will:

- offer a good choice of quality housing appropriate to need, including affordable homes.

The Authority and its partners want to achieve these outcomes for all of our children, but as this strategy explains it know it has additional responsibilities to support, encourage and enable children in care and care leavers to fulfil these aspirations.

The Children's Partnership Board reports to the NTSP and oversees the delivery of the **Children and Young People's Plan** (2014-18). It sets out the strategic framework for planning, commissioning and delivering children's services in North Tyneside under the following themes, which mirror those of the Our North Tyneside Plan:

- 0-5 Years: Ready For School – for which the key outcomes are a healthy early childhood and children ready to start school
- 6-19/25 years: Ready For Work and Life - the key outcomes being narrowing the gap in educational outcomes, ready for employment, reducing risk taking behaviour.
- All ages: Safe, supported and cared for – key outcomes: the most vulnerable children and young people are protected; improved outcomes for looked after children; the right support for children and young people with disabilities.

It also contains a specific priority to improve the outcomes of looked after children through which it seeks to ensure that

- looked after children receive the same opportunities and outcomes as their peers.

The Our North Tyneside Plan has the overarching aim of securing equality of outcomes for the residents of North Tyneside, while meeting the financial challenges the organisation faces. The local authority plans to achieve these outcomes by changing the way it operates through the development and implementation of a "Target Operating Model" (TOM), which describes how services will be redesigned and reviewed in line with the following these principles:

- dealing with causes not consequences (being proactive rather than reactive)
- getting things right first time
- using data and knowledge to make intelligent and lawful decisions
- targeting resource at those who need it most
- understanding and managing demand
- identifying and exploiting innovation
- enabling people to help themselves
- having the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time
- maximising the impact partners have on achieving outcomes.

Our looked after children are within the 5% of our population who most need our support. Using the TOM approach we are working with them and their families to ensure that they grow into adults who are able to live successful, independent lives.

These principles are also being applied to a review of the services the council offers to children aged 0-19 and their families as part of the **Prevention and Early Help Strategy**. We believe that shifting resources towards prevention and early help is central to reducing inequalities and transforming the lives of our most vulnerable children and families, while also addressing the challenge of rising demand for services and reducing resources.

A review of the arrangements for identification and early help undertaken in 2015, and independently assured by iMPOWER, has shown that Early Help Assessments could be used more effectively to build resilience of families and that assessment could play a stronger role in achieving prevention. The review, which analysed a sample of cases, showed that some children who had become looked-after had no previous interaction with social care, although in some cases they were known to other agencies. Strengthening local co-ordination will therefore play a significant role in prevention in the future.

Agreed by Cabinet in March 2016, the Prevention and Early Help Strategy has six objectives:

- Preventative universal services are provided in an integrated way in the borough and offered to all families
- Vulnerable families are identified and supported at the earliest opportunity
- Sustainable improvements in vulnerable children's outcomes are achieved by addressing the needs of the family as a whole
- Services to tackle the underlying causes of poor outcomes for children and young people are developed
- Every child enters school ready to succeed
- Children and young people flourish both in and out of school

This approach will also be employed to reduce the number of children returning to care and the siblings of children who are/have been in care joining them as looked after. It will incorporate existing work, including:

- Plans to evaluate the effectiveness of Barnardo's Family Group Conferences, which aim to help families devise their own plan to prevent children entering care and support those leaving care.
- The Safe Families For Children project providing befriending support for parents who are socially isolated to help them develop coping strategies; provides donations of basic goods and services; and can offer short-stay accommodation for children with host families.

3.3 What we know about our children

Knowing our children is crucial to achieving our ambitions for them and to being proactive and targeting resources effectively.

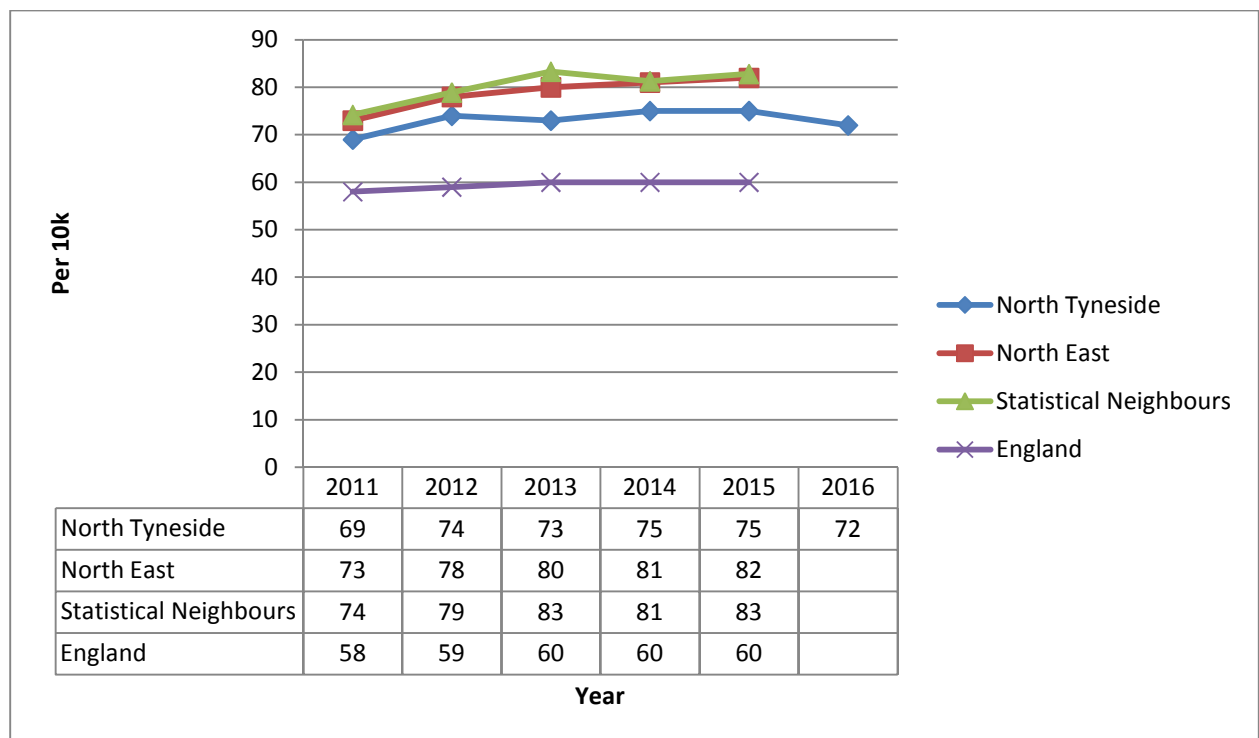
As the data below shows while North Tyneside had fewer looked after children at the end of March 2016 than at any year end since 2011, the number of children being looked after during the year has been growing in line with national figures, resulting in more children being looked after in the borough during 2015-16 than in previous years.

Numbers of looked after children

Year end figures - 292 children were looked after by North Tyneside Council at the end of March 2016. This is the smallest year end number of children since the March 2011 figure of 280. Chart 1 shows that there had previously been a general upward trend for the end of year looked after total in North Tyneside. However, this measure remained stable in 2014/15 (75 children per 10,000 population is equal to just over 300 children), before reducing (by 10 children overall) to the 2016 outturn of 72 children per 10,000.

In comparison to other local authorities in England, North Tyneside has had a higher rate of looked after children over the last six years. As the table accompanying Chart 1 shows North Tyneside has followed the national trend, with general growth followed by stability. Following an increase in looked after numbers in 2011/12, North Tyneside has remained around 15 children per 10,000 higher than the England rate in each year to 2015.

Chart 1: Rate per 10,000 population of children looked after as at 31 March 2015



In comparison with similar authorities however, North Tyneside’s looked after population has not grown at the same rate. As Chart 1 shows at the end of both

2010/11 and 2011/12 North Tyneside had a lower rate than the North East and the Statistical Neighbour average by around 4 to 5 children per 10,000. However, between 2013 and 2015 that gap grew; with North Tyneside rising from 74 to 75 children per 10,000, while the North East and Statistical Neighbour groups both increased by 4 children per 10,000. The reduction in children at the end of 2015/16 to 72 per 10,000 is against recent trend at both a national and comparator level.

Children looked after at any point during the year - Although the number of looked after children at the end of each reporting year has shown a stable and reducing trend over the last 3 years, the figures shown in Table 1 below demonstrate how the activity and throughput of children within the Looked After system is increasing. Indeed, provisional figures for 2015/16 show that North Tyneside had more children looked after during the year than in any previous year.

Table 1: Number of Children Looked After at any point during the year

Looked After Children during the year	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	% Increase 2010/11 - 2014/15	% Increase 2010/11 - 2015/16
England	91,180	93,200	95,300	98,070	99,230	-	8.8%	-
North East	5,360	5,710	5,920	6,180	6,110	-	14.0%	-
North Tyneside	409	413	422	426	440	459	7.6%	12.2%

Table 1 shows that the number children who were looked after in North Tyneside at any point during 2014/15 had increased by 7.6% over the four year period since 2010/11. There was the same upward trend nationally, and in the North East, although the trend in North Tyneside was not as pronounced. Despite the per 10,000 England, rate shown in Chart1, being lower than the North Tyneside rate, England's in-year looked after population was growing at a faster rate. The comparison of the in-year rate with the North East average shows an even more pronounced difference, with almost double the rate of increase across the region than in North Tyneside.

However, despite the fact that the rise in looked after children in-year was lower in North Tyneside than in comparator groups up to 2014/15, the inclusion of the most recent year's figures show that there is a growing rate of increased activity in the borough. 19 more children were looked after in-year by the Authority in 2015/16 than in the previous year. This growth to 459 children was the highest over a five year period, with the previous year's increase of 14 children being the next highest. Overall, there were 12.2% more children looked after in 2015/16 than in 2010/11. Although at the time of writing no figures are available for comparator groups in 2015/16, this result places the growth of looked after children in North Tyneside above the 2014/15 England rate of 8.8% and closer to the North East rate of 14%.

Where our children live

Table 2 shows the distribution of placements for children who were looked after by North Tyneside at the end of each reporting year (31st March).

Table 2: Type of Accommodation at 31st March

Type of Accommodation	Mar-11	Mar-12	Mar-13	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16
Foster Care Provided by Connected Person	29	48	48	60	49	54
Foster Care Provided by LA	160	162	169	167	159	141
Foster Care Provided by Agency	16	14	16	21	20	26
Parents/Parental Responsibility	17	17	15	7	11	11
Placed for Adoption	19	23	15	15	18	11
Residential Care Provided by External Provider	18	20	19	12	11	23
Residential Care Provided by LA	13	10	11	18	20	11
Supported or Independent Residence	6	4	2	5	13	14
YOI / Secure Unit	1	0	1	0	1	1
Total	280	298	296	305	302	292

At the end of March 2016, 221 of our children were placed with foster carers, this represents 75.7% of placements, a small increase on the 2011 proportion of 73.2%. However the proportion of those foster carers provided directly by the Authority reduced from 78% in 2011 to 63.8% in 2016, as more children were looked after by agency foster carers and connected persons foster carers at the end of 2016 than in previous years.

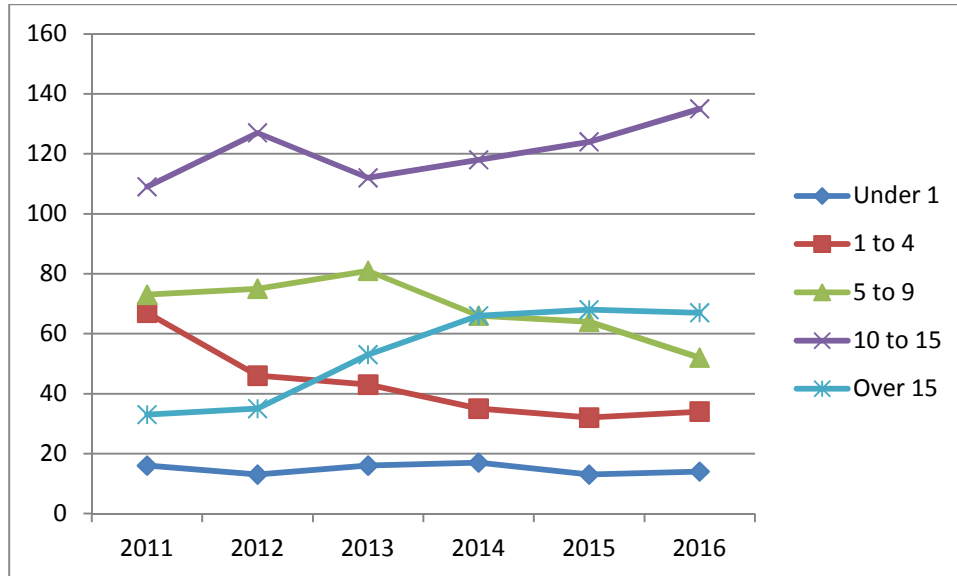
The number of children living in residential placements not provided by the Authority fluctuated over the period, and despite a low of 11 children (3.6% of placements) in 2015 this type of care became more frequent in 2016 and stands at 23 (7.9% of placements).

The introduction of more supported living provision within the borough has resulted in a fall of in-house residential placements and a rise in supported living. However the two provision types combined reduced from 33 children in 2015 (10.9% of placements) to 25 children in 2016 (8.6% of placements).

Age profile of our children

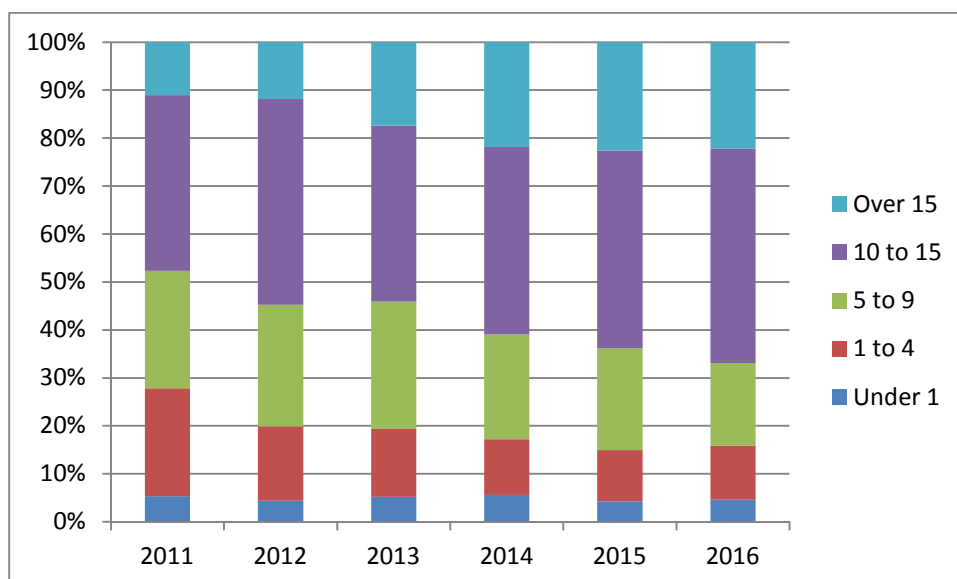
The age groups of children and young people looked after at 31st March each year are shown in Charts 2 and 3 below; the charts show clear trends which identify that more older children are being looked after by the Authority.

Chart 2: Looked after children age groups



Between 2011 and 2016 there was a distinct reduction in the number of children in the 5 to 9 year old age group, and an increase in both the 10 to 15 and over 15 age groups. In 2011 47.7% of our children were aged over 10 years. The proportion of children in the 10 plus age groups increased through the period, and in 2016 66.9% of looked after children were aged 10 or above.

Chart 3: Looked after children age groups %



Those children looked after under the age of 5 reduced as a proportion between 2011 and 2014; from 27.9% of all looked after children in 2011 to 17.2% in 2014.

This reduction was mostly within the 1 to 4 year old age group, which almost halved from 67 children in 2011 to 35 children in 2014. The number of children aged less than 1 at the end of each reporting year remained stable, indicating no change in the rate of babies entering the care system. Since 2014 the proportion of under 5's has remained stable, with the reduction in younger children predominantly among those aged between 5 and 9 year old (from 66 children in 2014 to 52 children in 2016).

The changing age profile and in year through put of children means that the needs of children for whom we are Corporate Parent has changed. For example older children are less likely to seek fostering or adoption and are more likely to live in residential or supported accommodation; and their support needs are different to those of younger children. How the Authority responds to this changing profile is reflected in how its budgets are spent.

Financial impact

As Chart 4 and Table 3 show from 2011 to 2016 (projected) the Leaving Care budget has increased by 73%. Less money has been spent on the Adoption Service and In-house Residential Placements. However, overall the cost of providing placements to looked after children has not changed from 2011 to 2016, and has varied by no more than 5% across that period.

Chart 4: Net expenditure by service area

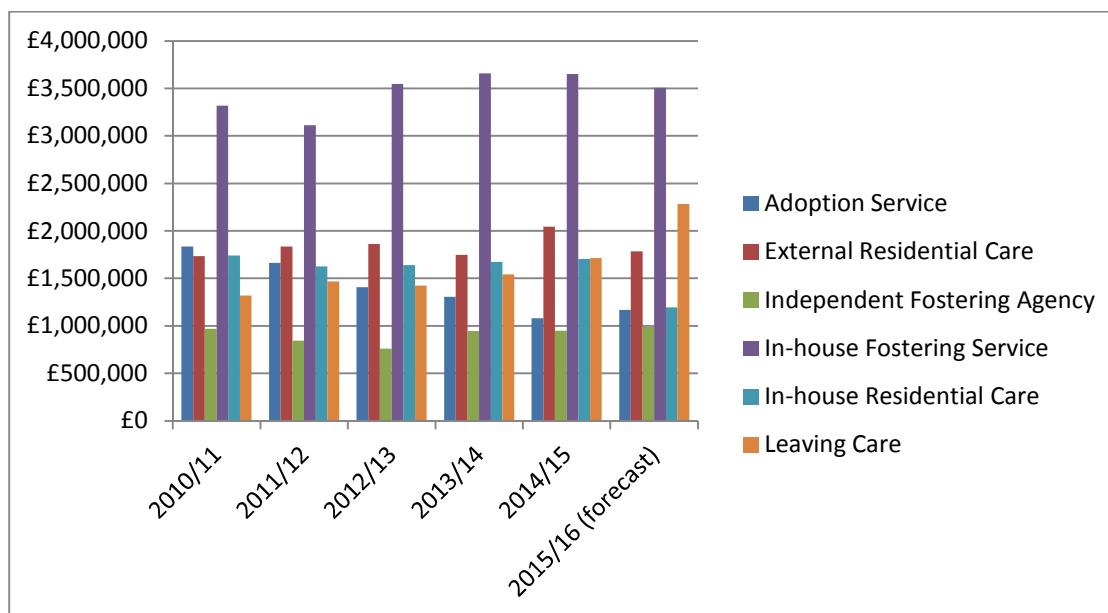


Table 3 excludes the costs of non-controllable support services and capital charges. Internal Residential Care is for Sycamore House & Riverdale throughout the period and includes cost for Wellington Avenue up to 2013/14 and Edmund House up to 2014/15, after which it changed to become supported living accommodation and transferred to the Leaving Care budget. External Residential Care includes a contribution from the NHS. Leaving Care costs include Starting Point at Edmund House and Purley Close from 2015/16.

Table 3: Net expenditure by service area

Service Area	2010/11 Net expenditure	2011/12 Net expenditure	2012/13 Net expenditure	2013/14 Net expenditure	2014/15 Net expenditure	2015/16 Net expenditure forecast at Jan 2016	Increase/decrease since 2010/11
Adoption Service	£1,833,849	£1,662,886	£1,408,298	£1,304,274	£1,078,725	£1,167,398	-36%
External Residential Care	£1,733,857	£1,835,689	£1,860,902	£1,748,770	£2,045,442	£1,784,814	3%
Independent Fostering Agency	£967,253	£843,627	£760,777	£946,730	£947,667	£988,566	2%
In-house Fostering Service	£3,318,809	£3,110,583	£3,547,446	£3,658,708	£3,652,798	£3,504,930	6%
In-house Residential Care	£1,741,686	£1,624,642	£1,638,784	£1,671,886	£1,704,143	£1,195,026	-31%
Leaving Care	£1,319,145	£1,467,877	£1,425,257	£1,541,091	£1,712,237	£2,282,423	73%
Total	£10,914,599	£10,545,303	£10,641,465	£10,871,459	£11,141,012	£10,923,157	0%

3.4 Our children's views and experiences

Listening and responding to views, experiences and needs of our children is fundamental to achieving our role as corporate parents. This happens in a variety of ways in North Tyneside for our children, both as individuals and as members of the Children in Care Council and Regional Children in Care Council (see section 4.1 for more details). We have therefore used the following sources of information to ensure this strategy reflects what is most important to them:

The Children's Care Monitor 2013/14 – published by the Children's Rights Director for England. This survey gathered the views of 2,305 looked after children and care leavers on keeping safe and healthy, bullying, having a say, education, being in care and leaving care.

Children in Care Stocktake 2014. A study undertaken by our Children in Care Council, when they ran focus groups with care leavers, fostered children, children in residential homes and the Children in Care Council to gather views and experiences of being 'looked after'. The themes they investigated were: safety, health, education,

dreams and ambitions, bullying, being in care, social workers, placements, reviews and meetings and leaving care.

Survival of the Fittest: Improving Life Chances for Care Leavers (2014) Centre for Social Justice. This study was based on a survey with 100 care leavers. It concluded that while there has been real progress for care leavers in England in recent years, the vast majority of spending and support has been focussed on the better-off care leavers, predominantly those with a stable foster care placement and who are able to remain in education. The care leavers who have not been targets of support – who have had the most unstable time whilst in care and who do not generally remain in education – are slipping through the cracks and experiencing unacceptably poor outcomes.

North East Regional Children in Care Council Joint Campaign 2015 – Improving the Leaving Care System. The campaign brought together members of twelve Children in care Council's from across the region. Together they identified six issues (life skills, aspirations, the age young people enter Leaving Care, the care leavers allowance, housing choices and leaving care buildings) where they would like to see improvements made, to ensure consistency of provision across the region.

State of the Nation Report 1: Children in Care and Care Leavers Survey 2015 – published by the Children's Commissioner. 2,936 looked after children and care leavers took part. It highlights that for many children, local councils do a good job, providing greater safety and security than could be provided by birth parents. However, some children do not find the stability they need and many can be very vulnerable because of their life experiences. Some are less likely than other children to achieve academic success or benefit from stable relationships and some are more likely to have problems with crime, drugs and mental health.

Management and performance data – including the Statistical First release for Looked After Children published by the Department for Education and the Authority's Children's case Management System.

Our Promise to Children in Care and Care Leavers (2016) – developed in partnership with our Children in Care Council. The promises relate to this strategy's overarching outcomes and the actions that need to be taken to achieve them, as described in the strategy action plan.

The promises are:

Our promise to Children in Care and Care Leavers



Social Workers

We promise to get to know you as an individual and will work to make sure you are as happy as you can be whilst in our care.



Having a say on what you think

We promise to listen to what you say and act on that. We will make sure that you know all the ways in which you can have your voice heard.



Foster Carers

We promise to make sure that you are treated as part of a family, making sure that you are respected and treated equally.



Being in care

We will work together to make sure that you get the best care possible. We will include you in this so you have the information you need, when you need it.



Contact with families

Contact with birth families should be in your best interest and we will review this regularly making sure we involve you in any discussions.



Education

We know that a good education gives you the best opportunities in life so we will support you to achieve all that you can, in a way suitable for you.



Leaving Care

We have huge ambitions for you. We will make sure that we work alongside you to support you to achieve the best start into adulthood as you deserve.



Health

Your good health is important to us so we will make sure that we do everything we can to keep you healthy and discuss with you how we can make this happen.



North Tyneside Council

4. Outcomes

The views of our children, together with the other drivers set out above, have helped us to identify the five overarching outcomes this strategy will seek to achieve. They are:

- Our children are listened to and respected.
- Our children achieve their educational and employment potential.
- Our children have a stable home and are safe.
- Our children are healthy and well.
- Our children build positive relationships.

The strategy looks at each in turn, highlighting the promises we have made to our children, outlining national and local findings and the views of our children. This information helped us to identify the outcome statements which underpin each overarching outcome and explain in more detail what we aim to achieve for our children.

The outcome statements were agreed at a joint event involving members of the Children in Care Council and Corporate Parenting Committee. Participants in the event agreed that the strategy's action plan will be a three year rolling plan focusing on a number of key outcome statements each year. The priorities for 2016/17 shown in the Outcome Statement tables within sections 4.1-4.5 were also identified at the event. These priorities create the framework for the action plan for 2016-17 which can be found in the appendix.

The action plan will be reviewed annually by the Children in Care Council and the Corporate Parenting Committee to ensure progress has been achieved and new priorities are identified for the forthcoming year.

4.1 Our children are listened to and respected

Our promise to our children

We promise to listen to what you say and act on that. We will make sure that you know all the ways in which you can have your voice heard.

Our responsibilities

As Corporate Parents we are responsible for ensuring that our children:

- understand how their wishes and feelings inform decision making
- are involved in developing plans about their care, education, health and future
- understand their rights and responsibilities
- have access to an advocate and independent visitor
- have the opportunity to take part in and influence the Children in Care Council.

What we know

When looked after children across the country are asked what would make care better, the top response is being listened to.¹ Nationally, two-thirds of children in care say their opinions are usually or always asked on things that matter to them; but 10% say they are usually not or never asked.² Just over half (55%) of looked after children say their opinions usually or always make a difference to decisions about their lives; 14% say they did not usually or ever make a difference.³

North Tyneside offers a variety of ways for our children, and their parents, to share their views and be involved, as shown in the examples below. All of these are promoted via staff, carers, on-line and by newsletters sent three times a year to all looked after children over the age of 8, to update them, explain how they can give their views and get involved.

Care Plans - While nationally two-thirds of children know what a care plan is and that they have one,⁴ North Tyneside's children in care understand what a care plan and a review are but say they find review meetings too formal, as they explain:

'Young people sometime feel threatened by all the professionals in one room'.

'They forget you are there and just have a discussion about you'.

They recommend:

'Make young people feel comfortable and involve them in the conversations'

Children in Care Council – North Tyneside has an active and dynamic Children in Care Council (CiCC), which is valued by our children:

'I like having Children in Care Council'.

'I like having the chance to say what I think without being interrupted'.

Through the CiCC our children are involved in service design, delivery and evaluation, and regularly consult with the wider looked after and care leaver population. Examples of the CiCC's work include:

- devising the Charter for Care Leaver and Leaving Care in North Tyneside leaflet and Promise to Children in Care and Care Leavers (2016).
- delivering Care4me training to staff and take part in recruitment and selection.
- designing contact room within council offices and making activity boxes full of equipment to be taken by staff supervising contact.

¹ Children's Commissioner: Children in Care and Care leavers Survey 2015

² Children's Care Monitor 2013/14

³ As above

⁴ As above

- completing a stocktake survey of looked after children's views in 2014, which has resulted in a number of improvements including:
 - the creation of a leaflet by Independent Review Officers (IROs) to explain their role and how to get in touch.
 - development of a post-review questionnaire by the IROs to help children assess whether they had been given the opportunity to prepare and share their views
 - development of age related versions of the Pupil Education Plan.
- establishing the Looked After Children's Champions Project, through which each member of the CiCC is attached to a key area (contact and social workers, education, leaving care, health, reviews and meetings, and being a good corporate parent) and meet with service managers meet twice a year to make positive changes together.

'Having LAC Champions is a good way to make sure service know what we want'.

- annually participating in two events with Corporate Parents and Senior Leaders, which provide another route for CiCC members to give their views directly to key decision makers. This has resulted in a range of changes, including the addition of corporate parenting as a key task in all new job descriptions. As our children explain:

'Senior managers meeting the Children in Care Council and other children in care is a good way for us to tell them what it is like for us in care'.

- initiating a Regional Children in Care Council Campaign.

Advocacy – Nationally 22% of children in care have used an advocate; 46% said they know how to get an advocate, but 39% do not know and 16% are unsure. The main reasons for using an advocate are to gain contact or more frequent contact with birth families or concerns about placements.⁵ In North Tyneside all our children aged 8 and over have access to an (in-house or external) advocate. They can also use an app called 'Mind of My Own to pass on their views on any aspect of their care to advocates, staff and review meetings, as they report:

'I like being able to use my phone and tablet to tell my social worker things whenever I want'.

Care Leavers Consultation and Advisory Group – All young people preparing to leave care value being listened to, taken seriously and having an influence over their future.⁶ In North Tyneside, in addition to the CiCC's Post 16 Forum, the Care Leaver's Consultation and Advisory Group ensures our young people are involved in service development and are able to challenge service delivery. As they say:

'Everyone should try their best to listen and make the way we live easier'.

⁵ As above

⁶ Children's Commissioner: Children in Care and Care Leavers Survey 2015

Listening to parents – Every month 10% of parents with a child in need, child protection or who is looked after are telephoned by our Participation, Advocacy and Engagement Team. Every fourth month those who wish to can attend a parental consultation forum. Views gathered in both of these ways are used to help shape service delivery, for example a project to further improve contact rooms.

Outcome statements

This information tells us that, in order to ensure our children and young people are listened to and respected, we must work together so that:

Our children and young people:	We will measure this through:	Focus for 16/17
Can influence decisions made about them in a way appropriate to the issue and their age.	Staff and carer training Care Plans and Reviews Pathway Plans Monitored by CiCC	√
Have all decisions made about them fully explained in a way appropriate to their age.	Staff and carer training Care Plans and Reviews Pathway Plans Monitored by CiCC	√
Can share views about their care	Staff and carer training Care Plans and Reviews Pathway Plans Advocacy usage MoMo usage Direct contact with decision makers	√
Know how to make complaints if they want to	Number of complaints made	
Can access support from an advocate if they want	Number of children with an advocate Momo usage	
Can tell us as Corporate Parents how well we are doing	Annual Report to Corporate Parenting Committee and Leaders Monitoring by CiCC	√
Help implement the 2016 Promise to Looked after Children and Young People	The Champion Project Annual consultation on delivery of the pledge.	√
Have their successes celebrated	Annual celebration events Twice yearly Corporate Parenting Events between CiCC, Corporate Parenting Committee and Senior Leadership Team.	√

4.2 Our children achieve their education and employment potential.

Our promise to our children

We know that a good education gives you the best opportunities in life so we will support you to achieve all that you can, in a way suitable for you.

We have huge ambitions for you. We will make sure that we work alongside you to support you to achieve the best start to adulthood as you deserve.

Our responsibilities

As Corporate Parents we are responsible for ensuring that our children:

- attend a school or other educational provision that meets their needs and that they learn. To achieve this we need to provide accurate and timely assessment of needs and specialist support, where it is needed, to help our children make good progress wherever they live
- receive the same learning support from their carers as they would from a responsible parent, to help them to take part in school and learning, and as they grow up, to take part in college, university, training, or work

The entitlements that the Authority has developed to underpin its aspirations for all children, including our looked after children, support our work to ensure our children are ready for school and ready for work and life.

What we know

School stability – Nationally⁷ 52% of children have changed schools because of a change in placement. 69% of those who have changed schools felt that the change was in their best interests; 15% think it had not been. Research undertaken by Bristol and Oxford Universities with young people who have been in care for more than a year at the end of Key Stage 4 shows that ‘each additional change of care placement after the age of 11 is associated with one-third of a grade less at GCSE’ and that those ‘who changed school in Years 10 and 11 scored over five grades less than those who did not’⁸ Our children have told us that:

‘Moving schools makes you not want to go’.

We would like more choice about where we go to school’.

Support from carers – Nationally three-quarters of looked after children say their carers give them some or a lot of help with their school or college work; however 7% say they do not receive any help⁹. Young people in secondary school report that teachers provide the most significant educational support for them, but teachers suggest they need more training to do this effectively.¹⁰ Our children acknowledge

⁷ Children’s Care Monitor 2013/14

⁸ The Educational Progress of looked After Children in England (2013)

⁹ Children’s Care Monitor 2013/14

¹⁰ The Educational Progress of looked After Children in England (2013)

that school mentors, being happy at home and carers' interest and support help them to do well at school and comment:

'We like getting extra tuition to help us achieve good grades'.

'Pupil premium money is good so we get the same chances and equipment as other people'.

'I don't feel supported; I was told I would never get the grades to be a vet'.

'I get told by my carers to follow my dreams and I won't let anyone change my mind'.

'My social worker gives me motivation'.

Progress and attainment at Key Stages 1 and 2 - Low cohort numbers mean it is difficult to meaningfully compare the performance of our children in care who their locally or nationally. However local data shows that in North Tyneside in 2015 all looked after children who were in a mainstream school achieved level 2 or above at Key Stage 1 in English and Maths; those who were not in mainstream school were either ineligible for the test or a school in Scotland.

In 2015 a third of looked after children at Key Stage 2 had high levels of special needs. Although most (11 out of 13) of our children made the expected level of progress from their Key Stage 1 results and around a third exceeded the level of progress that was expected of them, those sitting Key Stage 2 tests performed less well than those in previous years. Around half of our nine children at Key Stage 2 achieved the required level and one of our children achieved level 6 in all her SATs - the best SATs results in the Borough in 2015.

Progress and attainment at GCSE – Locally, our children's progress from Key Stage 2 to GCSE in 2015 contrasts sharply with that of the general population. In Maths looked after children were four times less likely to make the progress expected than those who are not looked after, and were three times less likely to achieve the expected progress in English.

Nationally, the Centre for Social Justice found that the attainment gap between care leavers achieving five GCSEs at A* – C (including English and maths) and their non-looked after peers is widening.¹¹ Locally, only two out of 23 of our children achieved five or more good GCSEs (A*-C) including Maths and English in 2015, down from a third of children in both 2012 and 2013. A further three achieved five or more good GCSEs without both English and Maths. This is significantly poorer than their peers and highlights the more challenging needs of the children who sat their exams in 2015, with less than half attending mainstream school, and more than a third having a statement of special educational needs.

Post 16 Education, Employment and Training - Nationally¹², 58% care leavers are in education, 8% are in work, 5% are in work training and 29% are not in education, employment or training. North Tyneside's care leavers exceed this and are more likely to be in education, employment or training (EET) than care leavers across

¹¹ Centre for Social Justice – Survival of the Fittest 2014

¹² As above

England. By December 2015 70% of North Tyneside's 17-21 year olds who had previously been in care were EET (44 out of 63); this is comparable with their non-looked after peers across the region.

This is reflected in the findings of the Centre for Social Justice's (CSJ) review of North Tyneside's Care2Work programme, which identified 'an encouraging and pervasive determination to improve the life chances of looked after children and care leavers and ensure they make good transitions to adulthood through appropriate education, employment and training routes and a wide-spread recognition that better relationships, not better systems and structures, were key goals'.

Research undertaken nationally by the CSJ¹³ highlights ways in which success in education and employment could be further improved, by ensuring:

- Pathway Plans) are in place.
- Care leavers have the soft skills we need to succeed in education and in finding work, such as demonstrating commitment and communicating effectively.
- A national culture that leaving care means a transfer to the benefits system is challenged, as nationally while 70% of care leavers say they receive help from their local authority with claiming benefits when leaving care, only 36% received help finding a job.

Our children's comments demonstrate good levels of aspiration:

We (care leavers) benefit from apprenticeships and the extra support provided.

'I want to be an electrician, my foster carer is a manager of a company and he is going to give me an apprenticeship'.

'I want to work on the oil rigs and I am planning to do all the courses'.

Higher education – Nationally, the proportion of care leavers entering higher education at 19 remains at the same low rate of 6% that it was at in 2005.¹⁴ Locally, 10 care leavers aged 19-21 are in higher education (9% of that cohort of care leavers), plus there are a further 8 up to the age of 25. This compares to a 40% participation rate for 18-19 year olds from North Tyneside who started Higher Education in 2014/15.

'I am going to university to be a social worker; I understand what it is like and what people go through'.

¹³ As above

¹⁴ As above

Outcome statements

This information tells us that, in order to ensure our children and young people achieve their educational and employment potential, we must work together so that:

Our children and young people:	We will measure this through:	Focus for 16/17
Are ready to start school	Entitlement indicators	
Develop their Personal Education Plans	Reviews Discussion at CiCC	√
Attend the best education or learning environment that best suits their needs and are properly supported to remain and attend.	Quality of Personal Education Plans School /learning attendance Exclusion rates Type and quality of school attended School moves by school type	√
Are supported to make best progress each year in their education and ability to learn	Expected progress in reading, writing and maths Expected progress in English and Maths GCSE (A*-C) including Maths and English	√
Have the skills to succeed in their education and learning environments.	% completed Pathway Plans Quality of Pathway Plans	√
Access the right work experience	% completed Pathway Plans Quality of Pathway Plans Access to job coaches/supported internships	
Are supported to have the skills and experience to find work and develop a career	% completed Pathway Plans Quality of Pathway Plans Access to Care2Work Access to job coaches/supported internships	√
Remain in education, training or move into work post 16	EET figures for care leavers Support given to those unable to enter employment	√
Have the opportunity to go to university	University attendance among care leavers	

4.3 Our children have a stable home and are safe

Our promise to our children

We promise to make sure that you are treated as part of a family, making sure that you are respected and treated equally.

Our responsibilities

As Corporate Parents we are responsible for ensuring that:

- our children live in safe, stable and appropriate homes or families, that meet their needs, and moves are minimised
- we are aware of the risks associated with offending, going missing or being sexually exploited and do all we can to reduce those risks
- young people preparing to leave our care are equipped to keep themselves safe and know how to find help if they need it.

What we know

Placement Stability – Nationally, half of all looked after children say they have not been moved within the previous two years, however 11% have moved four or more times.¹⁵ Locally placement stability is notably better than the national figure. Around one hundred of our children have been looked after by us for more than two and half years, and four fifths have been living with the same carers for at least the last two years - this is a growing trend. However one in ten of our children move placement more than once a year, which is similar to other local authorities and to the national average.

Almost all of our children (271 out of 292) live within 20 miles of their home address - with most of these living within North Tyneside. Of the remaining 21 children, one is being fostered by relatives in Australia, the remaining 20 are placed no more than a three hour drive from the Borough. North Tyneside has had one of the smallest number of distance looked after children in the country for several years.

Nationally, four-fifths of children in care think they are living in the right place for them – feeling they are part of a family is particularly important, whatever the setting. 10% do not feel that where they live is right for them, because they aren't listened to, trusted, do not have good relationships, do not belong, do not get the help they need or feel isolated.¹⁶ 58% are happy to move, but moves could be improved by: having a chance to visit, having a choice and more advance information and notification.¹⁷ These findings are reflected in the comments of our children which include:

'Respite' can make you feel like a foster child rather than part of the family'.

'Being put in care was the best thing for me at the time, it changed my life'.

¹⁵ Children's Commissioner: Children in Care and Care Leavers Survey 2015

¹⁶ As above

¹⁷ As above

‘On the times I didn’t meet my carers first my placement broke down’.

‘It’s scary – trying to fit in’.

Care Leaver’s Accommodation- Nationally, three-quarters of care leavers rate their accommodation as good or very good and 5% as bad or very bad. Although seven out of ten feel they are living in the right accommodation, a quarter say they are not, usually because it is not where they want to be.¹⁸ In North Tyneside, 95% of young people aged 19-21 years who have left our care are living in suitable accommodation – this is higher than the national average and something the Authority has consistently achieved.

North Tyneside has a successful Staying Put Programme, with 18 young people are living with their former foster carers under the programme.

While the Authority has made significant improvements to the quality and choice of accommodation available – most notably it’s independent living accommodation- over a quarter of our care leavers (26 young people) live in temporary or transitional living arrangements. The Authority therefore recognises that improvement needs to be sustained, reviewed and subject to continuous improvement and growth, for example we are aiming to develop shared accommodation for two young people per council house tenancy to remove the social isolation felt by care leavers.

As can be seen from the comments below our young people are also keen to see this choice extended, particularly regarding the location of their homes:

‘I have ambitions about where I want to live when I’m older. I want help to achieve this’.

‘The Leaving Care Team should not move people from place to place. It confuses people and makes them feel like they have not got a home’.

‘I don’t want to live alone when I’m older, I want a roommate. We should be supported to do things like this’.

‘We would like more choice about where our tenancies are and for these to be in all areas of the borough’.

Being safe - Nationally children in care aged under 14 identify the top three dangers they face as bullying, strangers and drugs; while over 14’s highlight drugs, alcohol and bullying.¹⁹

These fears are reflected in the views of our looked after children who cite drugs and alcohol; sex offenders and living independently as the biggest dangers they face. They felt that being able to contact the police quickly and having a key adult (their foster carer, social worker, family or the police) to turn to makes them feel safer.

¹⁸ Children’s Care Monitor 2013/14

¹⁹ As above

Children are twice as likely to be reported missing from care in North Tyneside as in the rest of the country, three quarters of the times that a child is reported missing to the police it concerns a looked after child. These episodes are usually short and concern a small number of children e.g. since April 2015 59 looked after children have been reported missing 399 times. Just over half of the missing episodes are for children living in a residential home.

Since April 2014 16 of our children are thought to have been at risk of sexual exploitation – 11 were identified as at risk after becoming looked after, five prior to coming into our care.

Six (4%) of our children aged over 10 years old had a final warning or reprimand in 2014/15. This is lower than in previous years and below the national average (5%).

As one of our children commented:

‘Being in care makes you different, I started getting into trouble when I was in care’.

Outcome statements

This information tells us that, in order to ensure our children and young people have a stable home and are safe, we must work together so that:

Our children and young people:	We will measure this through:	Focus for 16/17
Have an appropriate placement first time.	Number of placements	√
Have Permanency Plans that are considered at the earliest opportunity and implemented quickly, if appropriate.	Timing of the implementation of Permanency Plans	
Have a safe home to live in that meets their needs.	Ofsted rating of residential homes Performance against Regulation 44 Monitoring visits by Commissioning Team Suitable accommodation for homeless young people Quality of external placements and support Allegations against carers	

<p>Have meaningful Pathway Plans that they have developed with their social worker and carers.</p>	<p>Young people involved in developing Pathway Plans Pathway Plans completed Quality of Pathway Plans Young people's satisfaction with Pathway Plans Children with disabilities, have an effective transition</p>	<p>✓</p>
<p>Pathway Plans ensure our children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have the practical skills they need to live independently ○ Only move into their own home when they are ready. ○ Have a safe home to live in after they leave care that meets their needs 	<p>Checklist Participation Team Annual Survey Training completed</p> <p>Number of young people in 'Staying Put' arrangements</p> <p>Care leavers in suitable accommodation Choice of type and location of home Quality of home. Type of tenancy (including number of shared tenancies) Accommodation that supports education, employment and training.</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
<p>Age appropriately, understand the issues about and are safe from sexual exploitation and radicalisation</p>	<p>Referrals Training undertaken by carers, schools, staff and our children</p>	<p>✓</p>
<p>Do not go missing from care</p>	<p>Missing episodes Training undertaken by staff and carers</p>	<p>✓</p>
<p>Are not involved in offending behaviour</p>	<p>Offending rates</p>	

4.4 Our children are healthy and well

Our promise to our children

Your good health is important to us so we will make sure that we do everything we can to keep you healthy and discuss with you how we can make this happen.

Our responsibilities

As Corporate Parents we are responsible for ensuring that our children:

- are in good health (physically and emotionally), that we understand their health needs and can help them to improve their health
- have access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and therapeutic help if they need it, for as long as they need it
- who have physical or learning disabilities, access the services they need for as long as they need
- who grow up and leave our care, have the support and information they need to be healthy.

What we know

General health – Nationally, 85% of looked after children think they are healthy or very healthy; but 10% think they are unhealthy or very unhealthy. Care leavers are least likely to consider themselves healthy.²⁰ In North Tyneside, most of our children have up to date health checks: annual health check (98%), dental checks (96%), immunisations (97%) and under 5's developmental assessments (100%). This is higher than the national average in every instance, however these processes do not tell us how healthy our children think they are. Furthermore, following reports from our children that the assessments are not useful, feedback is not given and that a more personal approach would be welcome, for example:

'I'd like my health checks to be at home where I am comfortable'.

'I just like my foster carer dealing with my health issues'.

changes have been made to the health checks process and their impact is being evaluated.

Nationally, 85% think they are getting enough help to stay healthy; although again care leavers are less likely to agree²¹. In North Tyneside all children in care have free access to sports facilities and classes up to the age of 25 through an EASE card and can also 'take a friend' along. Furthermore at the 2015 Looked After Children Celebration Event, our children received awards for a range of achievements including:

- Achieving the Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh Awards and being an excellent horse rider and volunteers at Murton Stables.

²⁰ Children's Care Monitor 2013/14

²¹ As above

- Being an active member of a community project in Borneo with Raleigh International.

.Young mothers – Nationally 11.1 out of every 1000 women aged 15-17 living in England gave birth in 2014. North Tyneside’s rate was slightly higher at 13.1 (which equates to 43 births) but lower than the regional rate of 18.1. Currently 11 of the 18 young women in our care who are young mothers had given birth before the age of 18, suggesting a higher rate among young women in our care.

Alcohol and drugs – Nationally, two-thirds of young people in care list drugs in their top five dangers to children and 58% say alcohol.²² Our children also include drugs, alcohol and sex offenders as the biggest dangers they face; while work undertaken by iMPower with the Authority in 2015 identified that domestic violence or substance misuse are often the root causes of children becoming looked after in North Tyneside. Locally, 9 (4.3%) of our young people were identified as having a substance misuse issue in 2014/15, which was around the national average of 4%.

Mental and emotional health – Nationally, almost half of looked after children say they have mental health or emotional problems, while at 63% the rate is higher among children in care who have disabilities.²³ Furthermore rates of emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties are 4-5 times higher amongst looked after children, than in the wider population. Locally, over a third (38%) of children from a 136 cohort had their behavioural and emotional health rated as a ‘concern’ using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire; this is similar to the national average of 38%.

Nationally, two-thirds of children and young people in care who say they have mental health or emotional problems feel they are getting enough help with them, but only 54% of care leavers agree.²⁴ In North Tyneside, our children generally feel that they are receiving enough emotional support, but some care leavers would welcome more e.g. regular phone calls from their social worker. Our children identify that taking part in therapeutic activities like letter writing, worry dolls and art therapy, together with support from key people, helps them feel healthier emotionally and physically.

Outcome statements

This information tells us that, in order to ensure our children and young people are healthy and well, we must work together so that:

Our children and young people:	We will measure this through:	Focus for 16/17
Are healthy	Children in healthy weight and height range Feedback from the Children in Care Council.	√

²² As above

²³ As above

²⁴ As above

Can enjoy physical activities and exercise	Use of facilities and activities via the Ease Card	
Have on-going access to health services (including when they leave care)	GP registrations N and quality of health passports	
Enjoy good emotional wellbeing	Strengths and Difficulties Scores	√
Are safe from self harm	Hospital admissions for self-harm	
Have appropriate support managing mental health issues	Access to CAMHS Access to therapeutic support Access to counselling	√
Have good sexual health and access to contraception	C-card registration Teenage pregnancy rates Awareness among our young people with disabilities	√
Have access to drug and alcohol services.	Access to education on drugs and alcohol Children/young people identified as having substance misuse issues	

4.5 Our children build positive relationships

Our promise to our children

Contact with birth families should be in your best interest and we will review this regularly making sure we involve you in any discussions.

We promise to get to know you as an individual and will work to make sure you are as happy as you can be whilst in our care.

We will work together to make sure that you get the best care possible. We will include you in this so you have the information you need, when you need it.

Our responsibilities

As Corporate Parents we know that having stable caring relationships is one of the most important protective factors against harm and negative outcomes for everyone. We are therefore responsible for ensuring that our children:

- are encouraged to build positive relationships with the people caring for them
- understand their lives and identities through effective and timely life story work
- are supported to have contact with their families and other people who are important to them if it is in their best interests
- are placed with their brothers and sisters whenever possible
- grow towards independence and self-reliance, knowing we are there for you if you need us.

What we know

Relationships with social workers – Nationally, although the law says that visiting social workers should speak to children in private only 40% of children say that it happens on every visit.²⁵ Research by the Children’s Commissioner also highlights that children want a social worker they can rely on to be honest with them and who will help them to understand what might happen next; they want to be kept informed.²⁶

In North Tyneside most of our children feel they get to see their social worker enough and get to see them alone. Children in out of borough placements receive the same quality of care and oversight as those placed inside the borough. However some, who live in care homes, feel they did not get many visits from their social worker.

Many of our children feel they have positive relationships with their social worker; with our young people appreciating their social workers more as they themselves become older; for example:

‘I like my social worker as she knows me well’. ‘We should be able to keep the same social worker for as long as possible’.

²⁵ Children’s Commissioner: Children in Care and Care Leavers Survey 2015

²⁶ As above

'I like having a social worker who listens and tries and achieves the things I want'.

'As you get older you respect what your social worker does for you, it's like having a second parent'.

Understanding their lives - Being able to understand their life stories and why they came into our care provides crucial foundations from which our children can understand themselves and build and maintain key relationships. Nationally, however, half of looked after children did not understand why they came into care at the time they did and feel some one should have provided them with an explanation at the time.²⁷ Locally, almost all of our children understand why they are in care and half feel that being in care is the right thing for them, stating for example:

'Being put in care was the best thing for me at the time, it changed my life'.

However some said they missed their families too much and that being in care caused them to get into more trouble.

'Being in care makes you different, I started getting into trouble when I was in care'.

They appreciated having a life story book, but thought further improvements could be made:

'It's learnt me why I am in care and given me some good memories... I think the young person should be asked how they want the book to look'.

'My social worker made it. Nothings been done on it since though and other things have happened in my life. I like the way it's done but it should be added to'

Maintaining relationships – As research by the Centre for Social Justice highlights building strong supportive relationships while in care is key to children gaining resilience and avoiding poor outcomes. However, as the study identifies there are key points in children's lives when opportunities to sustain relationships are lost, due to separation from siblings, frequent movement and placements far away from home. They conclude that 'ways should be found to foster enduring and supportive relationships, with birth families, siblings, former carers and children's services, that last long after 21'.²⁸

The Children who took part in the Children's Commissioner's Children in Care and Care Leavers Survey 2015 agree, highlighting that having support for as long as it is needed, being understood, believed in and encouraged, having continuing relationships, consistency, more contact with birth families and being loved would all make care better.²⁹

²⁷ Children's Commissioner: Children in Care and Care Leavers Survey 2015

²⁸ Centre for Social Justice: Survival of the Fittest

²⁹ Children's Commissioner: Children in Care and Care Leavers Survey 2015

In North Tyneside our children are supported to maintain the relationships that are important to them - this includes key members of their family, carers and professionals, for example:

- The Mentor Project provides a consistent person who our children can go to for extra support, as one of our young people explained:

‘I have a mentor I can speak to. My mentor knows when something is wrong and digs until she gets to the bottom of it’.

- Young people aged over 21 years who have lived in our residential homes or benefited from the Starting Point Project are encouraged to remain in contact with staff.
- Starting Point offers ongoing outreach (with no age or time restriction) from known staff at a level that suits the young person’s needs.
- The Authority is working with the Centre for Social Justice to improve the support it offers to care leavers and aim to pilot work to ensure a group of adults connected to a young person can be identified to provide long term support.

However 17% of our children have experienced multiple episodes of care, rising to 24% for young people aged 15 and over; which will impact upon their ability to sustain relationships and access support.

Our children believe that:

‘Foster carers and parents should be able to work together more easily when possible to benefit the young person’.

‘Only the right people should be at contact and we should always feel comfortable’.

‘We want to keep the same social worker until we are at least 18’.

Sustained support – Although nationally only 62% of care leavers say they have a pathway plan;³⁰ in North Tyneside all young people who need a Pathway Plan have one and do not transfer to the Leaving care Team until they are 18.

Nationally, 11% of young people about to leave care say they are not getting any help to prepare.³¹ When asked ‘How often do you feel good about the future?’ 46% of children say ‘often’, 46% say ‘sometimes’, but 8% say ‘never’. Those who say they ‘often’ feel good about the future talk about relationships with carers; feel they are doing well in their lives; and are determined to do so. Those who reply that they ‘sometimes or never’ feel good about the future say they: feel alone, worried about not being ready, about not having enough help and support, not knowing where they will be living, about having mental health issues, and being alone.³²

³⁰ As above

³¹ Children’s Care Monitor 13/14

³² Children’s Commissioner: Children in Care and Care Leavers Survey 2015

In North Tyneside young people only leave care when they are prepared and ready for independence in line with the Right2BCared for ethos. For example, in addition to being able to take up their own tenancies or take part in higher education:

- 18 year olds who are in foster care can remain with their carers up to the age of 21 under our Staying Put arrangements (18 of young people currently do) and often continue to be supported by their former carers when they have moved to independence. As one of our young people explained:

‘My foster carer still helps me even in my own flat. I can ring and they will help. They became my social worker’.

- Starting Point offers support to school leavers up to the age of 21 to equip them with the skills and confidence to succeed independently. It also offers ongoing outreach (with no age or time restriction) from known staff at a level that suits the young person’s needs.

This is in-line with findings of the Children’s Commissioner that ‘more young people appreciate the opportunity to remain in foster care or semi-independent accommodation than do those who welcome the new found freedom having left care.... There is pride in making progress, but a value is placed on having supportive adults around them’.³³ It also helps to address the national finding that 77% of care leavers say that feeling lonely or isolated is difficult when leaving care.³⁴

Outcome statements

This information tells us that, in order to ensure our children and young people have positive relationships, we must work together so that:

Our children and young people:	We will measure this through:	Focus for 16/17
Are able to speak to their social worker alone	Case recording Ensuring sufficient numbers of sign competent social workers to meet local needs.	
Keep their social worker for longer	Changes in social worker	√
Have good quality care plans	Frequency of review and updating Child centred review meetings	√
Have life stories that are completed in a timely way	Quality and accuracy of life stories Staff training Children and young people’s involvement in life stories	√

³³ As above

³⁴ Centre for Social Justice: Survival of the Fittest

Are supported to maintain meaningful contact with their birth families (where appropriate)	Contact Plans Parental satisfaction	√
Have an understanding of safe and positive relationships	Care reviews Pathway Plans Training (especially for SEN/disabled children)	
Have a consistent, on-going relationship with some one who is with them throughout their time in care and beyond.	Staying Put performance measures Implementation of the Centre for Social Justice Connected Adults Project	√

5. Delivery of the Strategy

The strategy and its action plan aim to improve outcomes for North Tyneside's looked after children and young people. Progress against the action plan will be regularly reported to the Corporate Parenting Committee, and will include feedback from the Children in Care Council.

The actions and outcome statements within the strategy will be reviewed annually and reported via the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Annual Report to Council, Cabinet, Corporate Parenting Committee and the Children's Partnership Board. As part of which our children and young people provide their feedback on progress made against the strategy and on the focus for the coming year. This will enable Senior Managers and partner organisations to identify the focus for the next action plan.