

CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY 2023-2025

Children and Young People's Services

"HELPING YOU BE THE BEST
PERSON YOU CAN BE."

FINAL VERSION



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1. A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHILDREN IN CARE



As Cared For young people, we understand that it may not be the right time for us to live with our families. Many of us are happy to live with foster carers or in residential homes until we can return home or carve our own path in life. But it isn't just foster carers and residential staff that care for us, we also know that you as a Corporate Parent look after us too.

It is important to us that you know how important your decision-making is on our day to day lives, no matter how big or how small that decision might be. From a slight change in how a service is delivered, commissioning a new service provider or changing my where I live, we want to be at the heart of that process.

As a Corporate Parent you can help to shape our future by considering what is in our best interests, exploring our life stories, celebrating our successes and lending a helping hand when the journey gets difficult.

Sometimes people don't have high hopes for us as cared for young people, but we need you to be our Corporate Parenting Champions by redirecting that outlook to show everyone that we have the potential to achieve our dreams.



1. A MESSAGE FROM OUR CARE LEAVERS

We have been in similar shoes to the young people from Million Voices who have shared their message to you and echo this. As care leavers, we would like to remind you that your responsibility as corporate parents to us does not end when we turn 18. We encourage corporate leaders to care for us and to maintain effective relationships with us.

Please be mindful that we may already hold life experiences that others will not, so we feel it is important that you take the time to understand us, to steer us on the right path and be willing to support us through whatever challenges and celebrations we may face on our journey through adulthood.



2. FOREWORD



Councillor Jenny Bullen
Lead Member for
Children Services



Colette Dutton
Director of Children's
Services



Councillor Laura Flynn
Chair of Corporate
Parenting Board

Being a corporate parent means to always advocate for our cared for children, young people and care leavers. We want our young people to feel a sense of belonging, to have confidence in themselves, to speak out and to know that we will always listen. We want to support young people to achieve their dreams and aspirations, however this may look for them. We need to be the best possible parents for them by providing the right support at the right time.

To understand what our cared for children and young people need from us, we have co-produced this strategy with them as well as working with professionals from across our services and partners. We believe we can all work together to be the best possible corporate parents for the cared for children and young people in Wigan.

Our Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out our approach to support our cared for children and care leavers; we do this by putting the voice of our children and young people at the heart of all we do in Wigan, we listen to what they say about their lives and experiences of care.

This strategy is our commitment to ensuring that those with cared for experience, feel safe, feel a sense of belonging and are connected to the wider community and that they have what they need to become successful adults.



Our Vision for Children and Young People in Wigan:

"We want all children in Wigan to be happy, healthy and safe; to feel listened to and to have the maximum opportunities to be ambitious. If children or their families need help and support it should be at the right time, by the right person and in the right place for them".

3. WHAT IS CORPORATE PARENTING



The language we use is really important and we have been working together with the children in our care and care leavers to develop language that they feel comfortable with. We have refreshed the Wordinary, (based on the 'Language that Cares' document), which is a local guide for those working with children and young people as a reminder of the power of language to strengthen the positive and empowering conversations we have with children and young people.

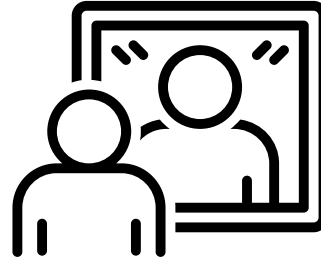
We have consulted with some of our children and young people about the kind of language we use in our care planning and work with them and have developed our own language to support the work we do, 'Signs of Happiness', to encourage a sense of belonging, connectedness, recovery and promote aspirations and success.

Many young people have differing views about what language they prefer to be used so we would ask that workers check out with young people what they prefer. Wider consultation is happening to ensure we listen to as many young people's views as possible.

We have commissioned a bespoke emotional health and wellbeing service for our children in care and care leavers, named by our Million Voices group as 'Our Safe Space'. The service will provide the opportunity to ensure we have the right support package for carers at the earliest opportunity so we can support carers to help children to feel safe and have a sense of security and belonging whilst we support them to recover from the trauma they have experienced.

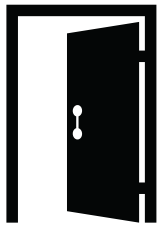
CORPORATE PARENTING MEANS

When we asked our children in care and care leavers what 'Corporate Parenting' meant to them, they told us the responsibilities of a Corporate Parent include:



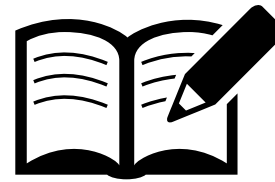
Self

- Potty training
- Washing
- Getting changed
- Mental Health
- Confidence



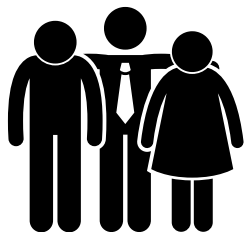
Home

- Electronics
- Stability
- Furniture
- Support
- Comfortable
- Safety
- Own space
- Cooking essentials
- Transport



Learning

- A good school
- Tutor
- Online safety
- Good teachers
- School equipment
- Support with home
- Staying safe
- Own space
- Swimming



Independence

- Money management
- Shopping
- Bills
- Cleaning and cooking
- Ironing and washing
- Bank account
- Rent or mortgage
- Travel
- Personal hygiene



Health

- Doctor
- Jabs
- Mental health
- Opticians
- Diet and nutrition
- Dentist

We recognise our Corporate Parenting responsibilities as



To be effective corporate parents, we have asked ourselves, "would this be good enough for my child?"

We need the commitment from all elected members, and council employees as well as our partners, i.e. Health, Police, other councils and the voluntary sector, all acting as good parents, committing resources and working together to improve the lives of all care experienced children and young people.

- Keeping you safe and secure, we want to stick with you and go the extra mile for you.
- Creating a culture where we know and believe in you. We want to help you to achieve your goals and ambitions - by recognising your needs, talents and aspirations.
- Listening and making your ideas happen, ensure your lived experiences improve how we do things and make sure we know and understand your story and your plans.
- Believing in you and helping you to be the best you can be both now and, in the future.
- Embracing and celebrating the individuality of each one of you.
- We want you to be healthy and happy.
- Listening to your worries and working with you to find solutions.
- We want you to become confident and successful adults living within your own community with support from trusted adults.

4. WHAT DOES BEING YOUR CORPORATE PARENT MEAN TO US?

This strategy is informed by the corporate parenting principles as set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017, these are:

CORPORATE PARENTING PRINCIPLES



01



to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of children and young people.

02



to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.

03



to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.

04



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.

05



to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.

06



for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;

07



to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living

JACQUI HARDMAN

SERVICE LEAD, CHILDREN IN CARE / CARE LEAVERS

As Service Lead for children in care and care leavers I want the very best for all the children and young people we care for, starting with making sure we have the best Social Workers and Personal Advisors who will remain consistent people in children and young people's lives. Happiness is a key part of what we are aiming for as the benefits can't be underestimated, and we work to achieve this by supporting everyone to feel better, to have a sense of belonging and connectedness, to be confident and have hopes for the future.

GILLIAN EYER

LEAVING CARE TEAM MANAGER

For us, being a corporate parent means supporting our young people as if they were our own by providing stable and consistent support into adulthood. We are a home from home and can be like their extended family.

CHARMAINE TARRING

VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEAD

We are the proud advocates for our children to ensure they get the best education possible. We achieve this through working in partnership with schools and settings, carers, social workers and beyond to ensure we all hold high aspirations for our children to enable them to have access to a wide range of opportunities in education, employment and training, and to achieve their future goals.

STEVE VICKERS

IRO TEAM MANAGER CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING MANAGER, CHILDREN IN CARE

As an independent reviewing service, we want to support you to live your life in a safe and happy way. We want the best for you and will be ambitious on your behalf, supporting you achieve everything you would like to do in all areas of your life.

We will work with you respectfully, making sure your voice is clear in your plan, that it is the right one for you and, where needed, challenge plans if we think they could be better.

KATHRYN PERRY

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR HOUSING SERVICES

Young people will live in a good quality home, in an area of their choice, where they are strongly connected to their local community, and will live a happy and healthy life. As a corporate parent, getting these foundations right is important as it will give our children the right start in life and support them to achieve their future goals and aspirations.

SHIRLEY WILLIAMS

SERVICE LEAD, PROVIDER SERVICES

We will listen to what our children and young people tell us and use that to make sure we have good quality, nurturing homes available to them when they need them. We want to help our children and young people feel safe, happy, loved and supported to reach their fullest potential.

DAN DRIVER

SERVICE LEAD - ADULT SOCIAL CARE LOCALITY TEAMS

Within Adult Social Care we are committed to ensuring children in care and care leavers are given the best possible support to maximise the opportunities available. We recognise the important role our Social Workers, Social Care Officers and Complex Dependency Key Workers can play in helping our young people achieve their potential. We will support our young people to successfully transition into adulthood and thrive in our communities, recognising their needs and improving their wellbeing.

TO US THIS MEANS THAT

RACHEL GREEN

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS - CAMHS

Asking for help we know can be difficult. Will anyone care, will anyone listen, will I be laughed at? CAMHS are sensitive to how such thoughts may stop a young person in care asking for the help they need. Everyone has mental health and through life we learn how to promote and sustain our mental wellbeing. At CAMHS we provide a service that is needs led rather than being about diagnosis. Working together CAMHS will listen sensitively to the worries and concerns and current experiences of our children in care. We will be sensitive to, and understanding of the young persons need for a safe place, for their voice to be listened to and heard.

SUZANNE GILMORE

ASPIRING FUTURES MANAGER (EMPLOYMENT)

We are here to ensure you have the appropriate careers information, advice and guidance to help you achieve your goals and aspirations for the future. We will support you with having experiences in the workplace and looking at the range of options for further and higher education. Careers and Progression Advisers will help you to make applications to education, employment and training and support you to feel prepared for the world of work.

STUART HOLDEN

BE WELL SERVICE MANAGER - STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION

Our Be Well team are proud to be corporate parents, we will provide support and opportunity to all our young people who reside in the borough to help them make positive choices and build healthy habits for life. It can be difficult to know where to start when making improvements to your health. Our team will help by making our core services available to you and provide the necessary support to enable you to access our centres and achieve the best outcomes for you, one of our Be Well instructors will even join you for your first session, should you wish. Join us on a fitness and wellbeing journey that will enable you to Feel Well, Live Well and Be Well.

ANNA LOMAS

FOSTERING SERVICE MANAGER

The fostering service supports the children of Wigan who live with fostering families and special guardians to make sure they experience unconditional love, acceptance and understanding. Our aim is to recruit, train and support carers who respond to young people in a therapeutic way and welcome them into their families so they feel they belong. We recognise and celebrate individuality and diversity. Our foster carers and special guardians are key people in the team around our children and with our partner agencies, we help our children reach their full potential including supporting relationships with birth families. We make sure children have security and stability with forever families as soon as is possible. We support them to only move on to independence at a time that is right for them. We have high expectations of our carers and will support them to dig deep. It is a privilege to get to know our families and the children they look after, celebrating the high points and supporting through the challenges.

5. CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS IN WIGAN

708

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN OUR CARE

AS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

57%

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IDENTIFIED AS MALE

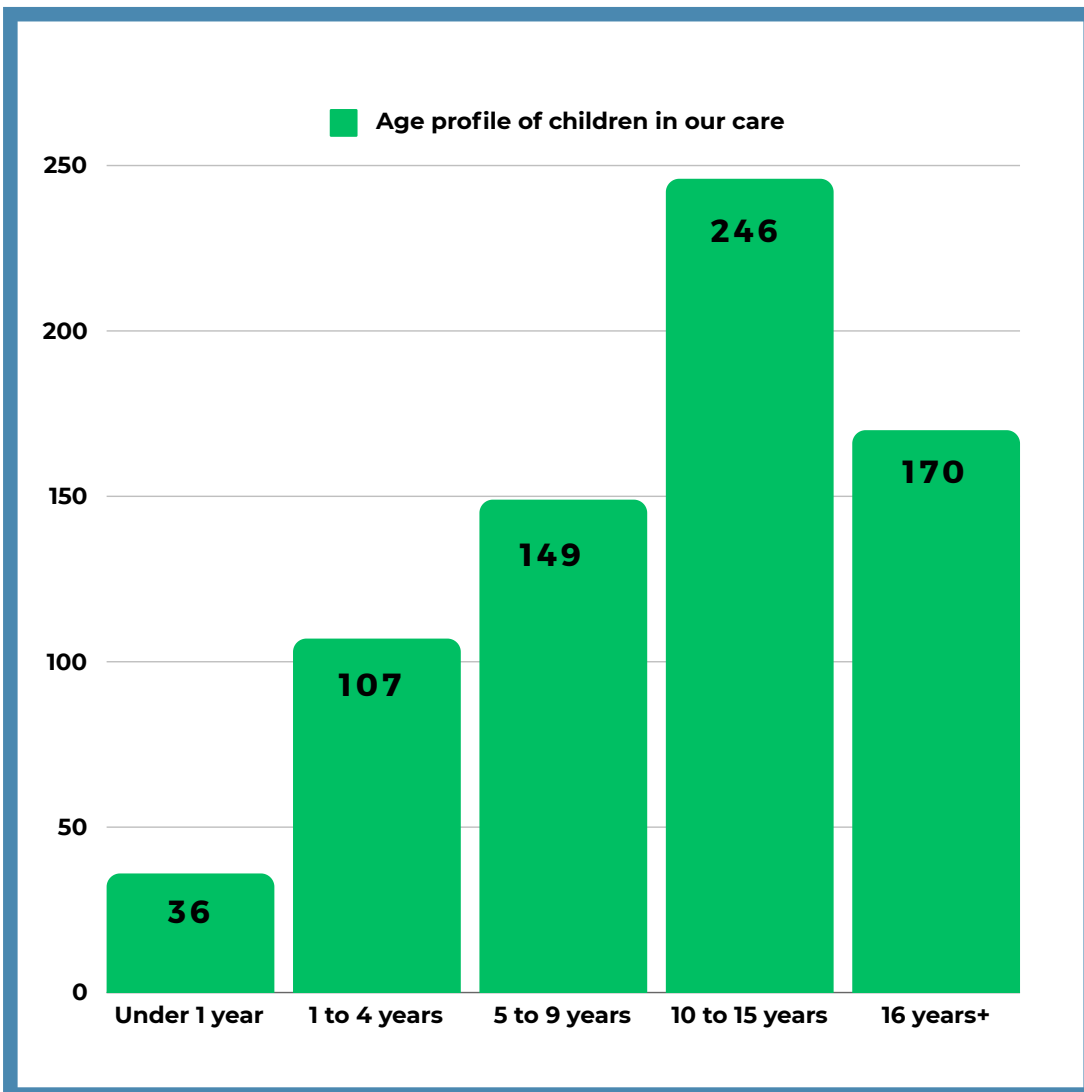
AS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

43%

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IDENTIFIED AS FEMALE

AS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

The majority of children, (35%), were aged 10 to 15.



5. CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS IN WIGAN

60%

CHILDREN HAVE BEEN IN OUR CARE FOR 2.5 YEARS

AS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

67%

CHILDREN IN OUR CARE LIVE IN WIGAN

AS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

50

SEPARATED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

AS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

235

CARE LEAVERS AGED 17-24 YEARS

AS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

95%

CARE LEAVERS ARE IN SUITABLE ACCOMMODATION

AS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

56%

CARE LEAVERS ARE IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

AS AT SEPTEMBER 2023

5. CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS IN WIGAN

100%

PERCENTAGE OF
CARE LEAVERS
AGED 17-24 YEARS
IN TOUCH WITH
THE COUNCIL

AS AT SEPTEMBER
2023

28

FORMER
SEPARATED
CHILDREN OPEN TO
LEAVING CARE
SERVICE

AS AT SEPTEMBER
2023

555

CHILDREN ON ROLL
WITH VIRTUAL
SCHOOL TEAM

END OF ACADEMIC
YEAR 2022/2023

84%

WIGAN CHILDREN
IN RECEPTION-
YEAR 11 ATTENDED
'GOOD' OR
'OUTSTANDING'
SCHOOLS

END OF ACADEMIC
YEAR 2022/2023

76%

SCHOOL AGE
COHORT WERE
EDUCATED IN
WIGAN

FOR THE ACADEMIC
YEAR 2022/2023

6. CARE LEAVERS HUB



The Hub itself has been both inspired by and designed by young people.

Young people have been instrumental in designing The Hub, including taking part in a session with an artist to design a mural for their room to 'chill out' in. There are lots of hidden messages in the painting, that are representative to young people of climbing mountains and overcoming barriers to achieve their ambitions.

Since our last strategy we have been successful in opening our Care Leavers Hub, which provides the safe space that care leavers told us they wanted. The Hub also provides a base for partners to work collaboratively with each other and with care leavers.

The Hub is open 5 days a week and offers a warm safe space for care leavers to use to seek advice and support from their PA's and other partners.

Drop-in sessions are offered from a range of partners including health and sexual health, Educational, Employment and Training support, emotional wellbeing support, and relationship support.

Our Connected Families Group runs weekly, this is a forum for care leavers to spend time with each other and to take part in consultation and co production to influence the service.

Young people told us:

"You get lots of help from your PA and at the hub, it's really good"

"I like to sit and talk with my PA"

"The hub is a safe space"

"The hub is a really good space to come and spend time, you can just be yourself and chill out or get some help"

"There is no judgement here"

"Its like a second family here"



The voice of our care leavers is becoming ever more prominent, and the hub is not only a safe space for young people to be supported but also a place where they are encouraged to positively challenge us so that we can continue to develop our services and offers for our young people that has also been shaped by them.

The offer at the Hub includes:

Our Parenting Offer

- A well-stocked baby pantry
- Schedule of sessions for parents to attend weekly such as story time, child development, healthy relationships, and baby massage.
- A 'week on week off' timetable, where one week a session such as messy play would be on and the next week, just a casual catch up for the children to play and the parents to chat.
- 'Start Well' workers to attend some timetabled sessions, with the workers locality being the same as young people attending the sessions so to build some positive relationships and encourage young people to attend Start Well groups in their local area.

Digital Offer

- Care Leaver as a Digital Champion as well as the Hub set up as an Online Centre to interact with GM, obtaining sim cards for care leavers and a small stock of devices being given to Care Leavers or available to use at the Hub.

Emotional Health and Wellbeing Offer

- Targeted mental health support on a weekly basis at the Hub, for our most vulnerable care leavers, offering advice and signposting to PA's, and offering direct intervention to care leavers.
- Relationship support from Domestic Abuse worker.
- Additional monthly drop-in sessions at the Hub for mindfulness and goal setting, and sessions from health (e-cigarettes, healthy diets and personalised support).
- Commissioned Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service for Children in Care and Care Leavers. The offer includes psychological input to PA's at the Hub, along with direct intervention to care leavers and group work supporting young people who suffer from low mood and anxiety.

Education, Employment and Training (EET) offer

- 'Next Steps' event for 17-year-olds who were welcomed to meet with partners from Housing, DWP, GMCA, Wigan & Leigh college and Aspiring Futures, Nationwide and Leaving Care team in the Care Leavers Hub to support young people on their journey to independence.
- Support from DWP work coaches and Progression Advisor.

We also have a 'Keep in touch offer' for 21 to 25 years and 'Always Here' offer for 25 years plus.

Our Care Leavers Hub continues to develop, offering an enhanced provision, influenced by the voice of our children and young people. Communication is important and care leavers co produce a monthly newsletter, the Hub has its own Instagram account, an idea that came from young people, as an additional way to share with people what is happening at the Hub, as well as a platform to create and share videos to support independent living skills.

7. OUR PRIORITIES

This section is about what our care experienced children and young people have told us and how this has shaped our corporate parenting priorities for 2023-2025. We have taken feedback from children and young people gathered through the Targeted Youth Support Service, Leaving Care Participation Worker and previous consultations with care experienced young people as we really want to understand what matters to children and young people.

This section also talks about what we have achieved so far for each of the priorities and what we will continue to work on.

In previous consultations, our care leavers have told us that they want to:

- know who they could turn to for help
- feel socially connected and less isolated
- feel safe
- feel respected as a person

OUR 7 PRIORITIES ARE:

01 HAVING A HOME

02 RELATIONSHIPS

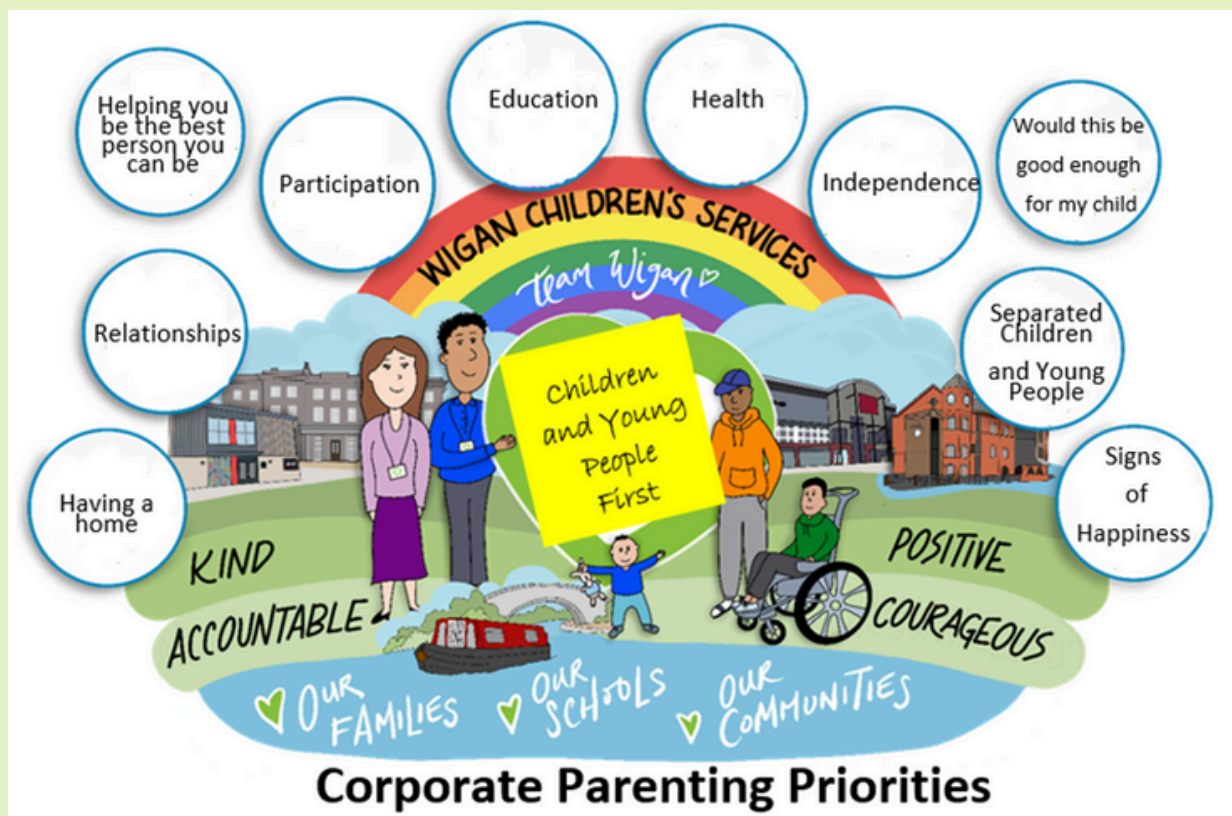
03 PARTICIPATION

04 EDUCATION

05 HEALTH

06 INDEPENDENCE

07 SEPARATED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



7. OUR PRIORITIES

01

HAVING A HOME

YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US:

Cared for children told us that they liked having a home that was welcoming, a positive environment and was a safe space for them. This was a top priority for them. They liked having everyday things like treats, a play station, holidays and playing in the street. Having a room of their own and having a say on how this looked was also a big theme from the responses.

In the survey, care leavers told us that housing was their top priority. A reoccurring theme in young people's responses was that it is important for them to feel safe, to be in a good community / location and support with bills. Housing can be seen as 'new beginnings' and young people shared it was good that they received support with items such as a cooker, fridge freezer, bed and sofa.

"It's important that I feel part of a family"

OUR PRIORITY IS:

Providing good, stable homes and ensuring children and young people feel safe and cared for.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

Since our last strategy we have been successful in:

- Increased our Staying Put offer to 18-year-olds, allowing them to stay with their foster family. Ensuring that transition planning and forecast of need begins at 16 years old with Transition Care Planning Meeting at start of Pathway Plan process.
- Developing Foster carer skills through training and personal development plans.
- Ofsted (ILACS 2022) recognised that the majority of children are settled in foster care, and live in Wigan; assessments of prospective foster carers are thorough and timely, and foster carers benefit from regular training and support.
- Ofsted (ILACS 2022) said that the adoption process in Wigan was timely, with comprehensive assessments, training and support.

"I always want it (my home) to be well maintained with no outstanding bills"

7. OUR PRIORITIES

01

HAVING A HOME

CONTINUE TO WORK ON:

Wigan Council Children's Social Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2025 continues to focus on:

Ensuring we have loving and good quality homes for our cared for children and care leavers, with collaboration with local ethical providers to dynamically respond to local need, shaping the market locally and ensuring choice for local homes for our children.

The following priorities are addressed:

- Continue to consult with our children and those that know them best about where they live.
- Shaping a children's home and foster home market that meets the needs of our children.
- Ensuring a robust foster carer recruitment strategy so that we attract the best foster families for our children.
- Learning from feedback from children and young people to co-produce and inform service planning and development.
- Work with Greater Manchester Local Authority to enhance our ability to attract Foster Carers into Local Authority Fostering Services across the region.
- To implement recommendations from the Kinship care strategy and focus on achieving permanence through Special Guardianship.

**"I like my home and my room.
I can't wait for Christmas
because
it has lots and lots of
Christmas lights
and we have 3 naughty elves"**

safe place
safe environment
bills and budgeting
home visits
home and mortgage

sure
home
important
time to time

feel safe
support
family

new home
Help
bills

utility bills
clean
visits from my PA
family - help
satisfied with the support

7. OUR PRIORITIES

02 RELATIONSHIPS

YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US:

Cared for children told us that good relationships are the second highest priority for them. That they wanted people in their lives (social workers, foster carers, residential staff, interpreter, youth worker), to listen to them, keep them safe, give them support, keep promises, to help them with activities, independence skills, making their options clear, give them reassurance and access Family Time, help to finish school and support with therapy. Some also felt that they had friends and that it was really important to see them.

“to keep me and my sister safe, and enjoy life”

Care Leavers told us that relationships are very much a priority for them. They recognised that not everybody is a good influence on their lives. They valued having open and honest discussions about the relationships in their lives whether this is good news or bad news.

OUR PRIORITY IS:

For cared for experienced children and care leavers to feel connected; feel safe, happy, loved and supported to reach their fullest potential. We want them to experience acceptance and understanding.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

Since our last strategy we have been successful in:

- Embedding the ‘Signs of Happiness’ principles in the workforce, to shift the practice to a strength based approach, within Children & Family Assessments, Care Planning and Care Plans.

**CONFIDENCE, CONNECTEDNESS,
ASPIRATIONS, RECOVERY, BELONGING,
SUCCESS**

- Ofsted (ILACS 2022) said that most care leavers are enabled to build trusting relationships with their PAs who are supportive.
- Increase in social worker retention rates, meaning stability for our cared for children.

“I want them to love me and take me to the park and on nice holidays. I like to dress nice and do my hair.”

7. OUR PRIORITIES

02

RELATIONSHIPS

CONTINUE TO WORK ON:

Wigan Council Children's Social Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2025 continues to focus on:

- Development of Keeping Families Together 0-11 Service and Family Group Conferencing - This service aims to prevent family breakdown and children/young people going into care, to improve family relationships and to work with families and other professionals to bring about positive change and reduce risks to children and young people. We work to keep children within their family networks and under Special Guardianship orders.
- Our vision is to achieve permanence for children and young people. Children who have stable loving homes have a secure base to grow and maximise their life chances. This starts at home with birth families and our ambition is to keep families together avoiding care admissions wherever possible and safe to do so.
- Development of ATOM Family Finding Service – This service aims to work with Fostering service to support stability in fostering households by strengthening a 'Connected Person' network, scaffolding households to keep children in a family-based care and out of residential homes to achieve permanence for children and young people.

“I feel like when I go out with friends, I have a bit of freedom and I can get away from my problems and be with people my own age and I like going out with my mates and have a laugh with them and help them if there going through anything.”

And also within the Children in Care and Care Leavers service:

- Development of 'Keeping Connected' protocol – this is when a person who has had a pre-existing connection to a child or young person through their previous professional capacity via social care. This may be a Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer or Personal Advisor (although not exhaustive to these). When the professional is no longer involved in their care and they both wish to continue their connection, that person then becomes a Connected Person.
- Focus on Care Leaver Supporter scheme – a flexible befriending programme where council employees volunteer as corporate parents to help care experienced young people to do the simplest things that we often take for granted, because our parents showed us how to do them.

7. OUR PRIORITIES

03 PARTICIPATION

YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US:

84% of cared for children who completed the survey said that they did feel listened to about what they wanted.

In the survey, care leavers told us that being listened to is their third top priority. 46% of care leavers who completed the survey said they always felt listened to by professionals.

OUR PRIORITY IS:

To have creative ways for children and young people to have their say and share their lived experiences, to understand why they are cared for and to feel celebrated for their strengths and uniqueness.

“I feel like I can give my opinion about anything and ask for help if needed.”

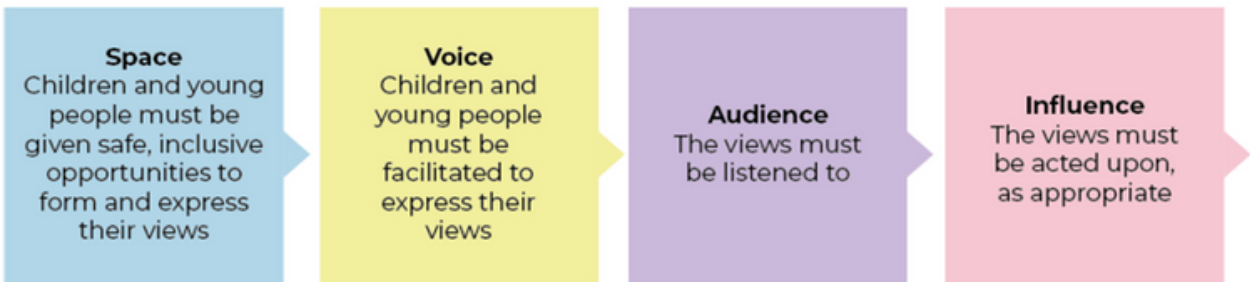
ACHIEVEMENTS:

Since our last strategy we have been successful in:

- 97% of school age young people have had participation in their Personal Education Plans (PEP).

Participation in statutory reviews for children and young people:

- Based on their most recent recorded reviews, 99.7% of children and young people in our care who are over the age of four participated, either directly or indirectly, in the review process.
- Launch of the Lundy Model in our participation approach with children and young people



03 PARTICIPATION**ACHIEVEMENTS:**

Continuing to seek the views of children and young people to improve our services, with the strengthening of the participation groups;

CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL - A MILLION VOICES:

A steering group for young people aged 12 and over to have a voice in the planning and shaping of local authority services. Young people develop a yearly action plan, alongside consultation work with service and meeting with senior leaders, cascading consultations out to the engagement groups to gain a wider voice. The young people also plan the yearly Celebration Event for all children in care across the Wigan Borough.

**CARE LEAVERS FORUM - CONNECTED FAMILIES:**

Participation group for Wigan's care leavers supported by the councils Leaving Care team. The group meets fortnightly and has a combined peer support element to reduce any feelings of isolation.

03 PARTICIPATION

CONTINUE TO WORK ON:

Wigan Council Children's Services Participation Strategy 2022-2025 continues to focus on:

- Listening to children and young people.
- Finding the best ways to involve children and young people to influence issues which affect them.
- Surrounding children and young people with the right people, involving them in the recruitment of staff across Children's Services.
- Relaunch of Independent Visitors.
- Young Inspector programme.

And also within the Children in Care and Care Leavers service:

- Ensure children and young people are able to participate in their meetings and ensuring their plans are accessible to them.
- Continued focus on Life Story work so that children and young people understand their past, are able to make sense of their present and develop a clear sense of identity for their future.
- Continue to ensure that those children coming into care have a good understanding of their rights and entitlements, development of 'Entry into care' pack co-produced with cared for children.

Participation in statutory reviews:

- Slightly under half of those contributing to their reviews did so directly by attending the meeting itself. Our aim is to increase this to over 60%.

7. OUR PRIORITIES

04

EDUCATION

YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US:

61% of cared for children who completed the survey said that school was important to them.

71% of care leavers who completed the survey shared that education, employment or training was important to them. These young people varied between being employed, in a traineeship and wanting to return to college or training.

“My education is important to me, getting the grades to get a job.”

OUR PRIORITY IS:

To support all cared for children to have access to a good quality education matched to their individual learning needs, and to build upon their ambitions. Young people to have access to post-16 education, training and employment options; making sure the right conversations are taking place with young people to encourage them to realise their dreams.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

Since our last strategy we have been successful in:

- There has been an increase in the percentage of Cared for Children achieving Good Levels of Development (GLD) in the Early Years from 41% in 2022 to 53% in 2023.
- There has been an increase in the percentage of Cared for Children meeting the expected standards at the end of Keystage 1 and 2 in Reading, Writing and Maths (RWM). As well as an increase in the number of students achieving minimum Grade 4 in English and Maths GCSE.
- Education toolkit developed for social workers and School Governors to support a focus on outcomes for Cared for young people.
- Virtual School Team and Aspiring Futures team have worked in partnership with Greater Manchester Higher and Wigan and Leigh College to deliver ‘Success for Life’. This involves inspirational visits to college and universities, which have supported our cared after children in Year 9 and 11.

7. OUR PRIORITIES

04

EDUCATION

“I am on an apprenticeship with Heinz Kraft as a care leaver”

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Improving employment, education, and training outcomes from June 2022 to June 2023 for both 16–17-year-olds and 18–24-year-olds, as extra opportunities were sourced for our care experienced young people and care leavers.
- Linking to local businesses to encourage them to prioritise care leavers as part of their social value commitments and corporate parenting responsibility.
- A traineeship programme with Kraft Heinz, Wigan Council and Wigan and Leigh College. This programme involved ten care leavers with the opportunity, five of which progressed onto a full Apprenticeship.
- Strong partnership with Wigan and Leigh College.
- Bespoke provision such as the Steps to Confidence and Wellbeing programme which have helped young people to raise their confidence and motivation to enable them to make their next steps into employment, education or training.

CONTINUE TO WORK ON:

Wigan Excellence in Education strategy 2020 – 2030 continues to focus on:

- Continue to use evidence to understand what makes the biggest difference to the outcomes of cared for children. Supporting our schools and settings to feel confident to meet the needs and make appropriate provision.
- A clear attendance strategic plan that reduces the number of children and young people that are absent from their education provision because of disengagement, reduced timetable, exclusion and illness.
- Our Graduated approach and ensuring that the SEND needs of Cared for Children are identified at the earliest point and well supported.
- Ensuring that Cared for young people have support to understand and access the next steps that are appropriate to their aspirations.

Wigan Council Education, Employment or Training Strategy continues to focus on:

- Continuing the Aspiring Futures service to reduce care experiences young people not in employment, education or training.

7. OUR PRIORITIES

05

HEALTH

YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US:

79% of the of cared for children who completed the survey said their health was important to them.

Over 60% of care leavers who took part in the survey said that it is important to them that they are healthy.

OUR PRIORITY IS:

To support all cared for children and young people in their physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing. That those young people who need support for substance misuse are given this and supported to help them continue to make healthy choices by accessing information, services and support.

“I love football. I'm mini Messi!”

“I hope to be able to continue with my CAHMS as it is very beneficial for my mental health.”

ACHIEVEMENTS:

Since our last strategy we have been successful in:

- Developing 'Our Safe Space' - a flexible and a responsive emotional health and wellbeing service to provide the right support at the right time to avoid an escalation of need and support stability within the children and young person's home. The service will include understanding children's needs at the point they enter our care so we can offer the best possible support to them and their carers to increase the likelihood of them staying with their carers.
- As corporate parents we have offered workshops to our children's social workers, Foster Carers and their supervising social workers in Understanding the Neuroscience of Attachment and Developmental Trauma. The workshops are delivered by Specialist Child Clinical Psychologists and are helping staff and carers to develop strategies and approaches to manage children's behaviours, whilst promoting positive emotional wellbeing and overall better mental health outcomes for children and young people.
- Enhancing our Leisure offer to children in care and care leavers.
- Bi-weekly consultation slots for Foster Carers with CAMHS.

7. OUR PRIORITIES

05

HEALTH

“ I want to be big and strong, and clean my teeth twice a day.”

ACHIEVEMENTS:

Since our last strategy we have been successful in:

- Weekly consultations for Children in Care workforce with CAMHS.
- Monthly health drop in sessions at the hub delivered by the CiC Nurses and Spectrum (Sexual Health Services).
- Consultation with young people has been completed and 'My Health Passport' has been developed. Every child will have a copy before their 18th birthday.
- 98.5% of children cared for by Wigan had a health assessment completed in the year 2022/23.
- Delivery of foster carer training focussed on healthy eating, puberty and healthy relationships.
- We ensured that all children in care had access to a dentist and supported those who had difficulty registering via the GM Pathway, this gives priority to children in care.
- Look at the transition from Paediatrics to Adult services to reduce delays and gaps in service.

CONTINUE TO WORK ON:

Wigan Council Education, Employment or Training Strategy continues to focus on:

- Review resources to support children who have been sexually abused.
- Review waiting times for referrals to Community Paediatrics.
- Collating softer data measures from the evaluations of the impact of services on children and young people.

7. OUR PRIORITIES

06 INDEPENDENCE

YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US:

38% of cared for young people who completed the survey said that they felt ready for independence, others said it was a long way off and others mentioned that they would like more help to become ready to be leaving care.

“I want to be able to cope and do things on my own.”

In the survey, care leavers told us that money and finance was their second top priority. Care leavers spoke of more information needed at an earlier age and more information and communication to help them prepare.

OUR PRIORITY IS:

To support care leavers to become independent, with the life skills they need to be successful adults, whatever this may look like for them; who are confident in the community and in work and if they become parents themselves.

“I am starting my GCSE's in September at school and I think I have an idea of what I want to do when I'm older.”

ACHIEVEMENTS:

Since our last strategy we have been successful in:

- Enhanced Tenancy Support offer to Care Leavers
- Holding Next Steps Transition Event for 17-year-olds, who were welcomed to meet with partners from Housing, DWP, GMCA, Wigan & Leigh college and Aspiring Futures, Nationwide and Leaving Care team.
- Launched new practice standards between Independent Reviewing Officers and Pathway Plan Reviewing Officers, ensuring better continued oversight around a person's journey to independence.

CONTINUE TO WORK ON:

- Support for care leavers at the point of transition.
- Transition to Independence Scheme.

support was already good
 Regular support
 everyday skills
 circle and the people
 supportive contact
 care leavers
 visits
 new people
 people
 sure
 help and support
 support helping
 care leaver
 contact
 fully cared
 young people
 Knowing more about it earlier
 needs
 Better communication

7. OUR PRIORITIES

07

SEPARATED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Separated children and young people is the term we use in Wigan for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).

At September 2023 we have 50 Separated children in Wigan, accounting for 7% of our total children in care cohort.

In August 2022, the government set 0.1% of the child population in Wigan as the number of Separated Children that we should be responsible for. This means that 68 is the number of Separated Children that we can expect.

With our current Separated Children, all of these are male, aged between 15 to 17 with the majority speaking Arabic, and top three nationality descriptions of Sudanese, Afghan and Iranian.

What is significant to note is that the majority of these young people are 17 years old, which means that in the next 12 months they will be transferring to the Leaving Care and Transition Team as a 'former separated children and young people' cohort.

Our current 'former separated children and young people' cohort is 27 young people, who are aged between 18 to 21 years old and are predominately male with one female. The majority of the cohort have an ethnicity of E2 - Any Other Ethnic Group with the main language being Kurdish.

The majority of the young people have an immigration status of Asylum Seeking or have time limited leave to remain, and then we have Indefinite leave to remain and some young people have been awarded Refugee status. In this cohort, 47% are engaged in full time education other than higher education with 3% not in education, employment or training.

The majority of 'former separated children and young people' are placed in semi-independent living with some placed with other foster carer - not long term or IFA. 58% of young people are placed in Liverpool and the rest are placed within the Wigan borough.

7. OUR PRIORITIES

07

SEPARATED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US:

Separated young people that were spoken to shared that it is not helpful that services are based in Wigan if they do not live there and that different local authorities should work better together.

Young people shared that it was very helpful when interpreters were used to support communication with their Leaving Care Personal Advisors, and that when their learnt English improved, Personal Advisors were creative in using other ways to communicate such as language apps, facial expressions, gestures and drawing pictures / diagrams.

Young people shared that they would like to be supported more with being able to “make roots and began to be a part of the community” that they also contribute to through their studies and sometimes jobs. Young people shared that spending time in hotels was difficult and they faced uncertainty, and at times verbal abuse.

The young people spoken to shared that they had positive experiences with their Leaving Care Personal Advisors, that they are helpful, they care, and always take the time to listen. Young people spoke of personal advisors being creative in the way that they support, and are considerate of their adverse experiences.

OUR PRIORITY IS:

To support Separated Children and Young People to gain a sense of a sense of community, inclusion, and safety.

Separated children and young people cohort are a priority in Wigan Council Children’s Social Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2025.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

We have set up a steering group to look at the offer specifically for our Separated Children and Young People.

This group looks at accommodation, education, employment and training as well as legal and identity issues, and the cultural offer that Separated Children and Young People need. The group has co-designed good practice guidance with North West Regional Strategic Migration Partnership.

07

SEPARATED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

CONTINUE TO WORK ON:

- As corporate parents we welcome separated children and young people and will strive to continue to proactively look at challenges and improve the local offer by:
 1. Relationship building with a wider group of providers who have skills, experience and who are willing to work more closely with Wigan to grow our post 16 supported accommodation offer for separated children and young people.
 2. Ensuring that as part of the wider sufficiency strategy and action plan we explore all potential routes for loving homes for our separated children and young people cohort such as in-house or external fostering, supported accommodation and supported lodgings.
 3. Triple planning for Separated Childrens' Pathway Plan.
 4. Engaging with providers who have:
 - good links with legal firms experienced in the asylum process.
 - relationships with affordable move on housing as young people transition to adulthood.
 - a high level of sensitivity to and track record of being able to respond to a diverse range of need acknowledging the trauma, loss and separation this cohort of children and young people have experienced.

8. OUR PROMISE TO CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS

In 2023, the pledge was updated and co-produced with our children in care group, 'A Million Voices.'

This is our promise to our cared for children, young people and care leavers about the care and support that they will receive from us as their corporate parent.

Wigan's Pledge to all cared for children and young people.

Our Care Leavers' Ask of Corporate Parents

Wigan Council

The Pledge for children who are looked after

This is our promise to children and young people who are living in care in Wigan Borough.

We promise to care about you and give you stability

We will:

- Make sure you live with people who look after you
- Help you to stay in a place where you are happy for as long as possible
- Help you to stay with your brothers and sisters whenever possible
- Support you to stay in touch with the people who matter to you when it is safe for you to do so
- Help you to keep the same social worker for as long as possible
- Listen to your worries and communicate with you regularly so you'll know what's going on
- Always be open, honest and friendly

We promise to help you prepare for your future

We will:

- Make sure you go to a school or college where you are happy and making good progress
- Help you to do the positive things you enjoy, such as sports or creative activities
- Help you learn the skills you will need to become independent, such as cooking, DIY and money management
- Make sure any meetings you need to go to don't affect your learning
- Make sure you get the same opportunities as everyone else, such as work placement opportunities
- Help you to be the best that you can be
- Help you explore your skills and aspirations

We promise to treat you with respect

We will:

- Listen to you and respect your views
- Support you to build your skills and confidence to have your say
- Involve you in meetings that are about you whenever appropriate. Make sure you are included in the meeting if you are there and not 'talked about'
- Give you a say over where and when we meet with you
- Give our best to you every day
- Value your opinions

Our ask of you:

TO BE HEARD
 TO ALWAYS BE SUPPORTED
 TO BE LISTENED TO
 TO NEVER GIVE UP ON US
 TO BE TREATED EQUALLY
 TO BE MINDFUL OF OUR LIFE EXPERIENCES SO FAR
 TO BE UNDERSTANDING OF OUR MENTAL HEALTH
 TO SUPPORT US WITH PREPARING TO BE INDEPENDENT
 TO KEEP PROMISES AND COMMITMENTS YOU'VE MADE
 TO SUPPORT US TO FOLLOW OUR DREAMS
 TO CHALLENGE ANY STEREOTYPES WHEN WE ARE NOT THERE

J. Bullen
 Councillor Jenny Bullen,
 Cabinet Member for
 Children and Families

C. Dutton
 Colette Dutton, Director of
 Children and Young People's
 Services, Wigan Council

This pledge has been agreed with young people from A Million Voices youth voice group.

9. WHO WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

In Wigan, our Corporate Parenting Board is responsible for the delivery of the Corporate Parenting action plan which is used to improve outcomes based on our seven priorities. There are Board Members who represent services for each of the priorities.

<p>SERVICE LEAD, CHILDREN IN CARE/CARE LEAVERS</p>	<p>JACQUI HARDMAN</p>
<p>HAVING A HOME</p>	<p>KATHRYN PERRY, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR HOUSING SERVICES</p> <p>ANN CLARKSON, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - EARLY HELP, PREVENTION AND SUFFICIENCY</p>
<p>RELATIONSHIPS</p>	<p>SANDIE HAYES, PRACTICE DIRECTOR - CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE</p>
<p>PARTICIPATION</p>	<p>MIKE BLOWER, SERVICE MANAGER, START WELL, EARLY HELP AND TARGETED SUPPORT</p> <p>TBC CARED FOR EXPERIENCE, CO- CHAIR</p>
<p>INDEPENDENCE</p>	<p>JO WILLMOTT, DIRECTOR - SOCIAL CARE AND TRANSFORMATION</p> <p>DAN DRIVER SERVICE LEAD - ADULT SOCIAL CARE LOCALITY TEAMS</p>

HEALTH	<p>RACHEL GREEN, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS - CAMHS</p> <p>STEPHANIE WHITELAW WIGAN LOCALITY ICB LEAD</p> <p>ALISON JONES NAMED NURSE FOR CHILDREN IN CARE</p>
EDUCATION	<p>CATH PEALING, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - EDUCATION</p> <p>CHARMAINE TARRING - VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEAD</p> <p>CLAIRE BURNHAM, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - SKILLS AND ENTERPRISE</p>
SEPARATED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	<p>ANN CLARKSON, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - EARLY HELP, PREVENTION AND SUFFICIENCY</p>

10. GLOSSARY

Corporate Parent: this refers to the council that shares parental responsibility for the children and young people in its care.

Consultation: this means making plans and decisions about how people and families are supported by talking to them and making sure we learn from their experiences to provide the best help possible.

Advocacy: this means speaking up on someone else's behalf if, for whatever reason, they don't feel able to be properly heard themselves.

Entitlement: this means the support someone can expect to be offered within the law; for example, a child in care must legally have support from a social worker.

Strategy: this is an overall plan that aims to improve things for people.

Community: this refers to the place you live in and the other people around you.

Elected members: these are your local councillors who are elected every few years. Each elected member focuses on a particular area, such as the lead member for children's services and the chair of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Care experienced: this can be used to describe someone who has been in care as a child or young person, or who still is.

Participation: this means the children, young people and families being involved in meetings about them, attending groups and events, and helping the council to design and change services and support through sharing their opinions and experiences.

Independence: though we often talk about this as the legal definition, meaning 'from your 18th birthday onwards', the main intention when discussing 'independence skills', 'independent living' and so on is to ensure that our children and young people are developing the skills to thrive before reaching so independence is successful later on and people have greater control over their outcomes, always with the ongoing offer of support.

Separated Young Person: this is the phrase we use in Wigan (and other places) to describe the children and young people who have entered the UK without any adults and are in our care as a result.

Transition: though this can have a number of other meanings, usually when we talk about transitions we are referring to the period in which a young person in care is approaching their 18th birthday, which often means a change in the professional adults supporting them. It is really important that those around you get things right in the transition period, which is why we focus on it a lot.

Ofsted: although we mainly hear about Ofsted as the people who inspect schools, they also inspect council children's services, including social work teams for children and young people in care, personal advisors, independent reviewing officers and so on. Ofsted examine what we do to support and care for our children and young people, and how well we do it.

Sufficiency: this means 'how many homes we have for our children and young people in care, and how suitable the homes are for meeting their needs'.



THANK YOU TO THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
WHO HAVE CO PRODUCED THIS STRATEGY WITH US