

Hertfordshire Corporate Parenting Strategy



Our Exciting Life Changing Plan

2022-2025



Hertfordshire

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Foreword

From our children in care and care leavers...

Being in care should never put you at a disadvantage

We want to be helped to work on our feelings so that we can move on from them and become the best that we can be - when we leave care we should be confident in all our relationships.

In care, young people should have opportunities to find things they like and are interested in and that help them develop.

Our vision is that being in care should always be better than the situation young people were removed from, or what is the point?

Our vision is that the experience of coming into care should be as planned and natural as possible and not traumatic.

Our vision is that our feelings are noticed and respected and that everyone understands it is not surprising if we feel angry, sad or scared.

Our vision is that all young people in care and care leavers feel happy with their lives. To feel comfortable where they live, like anyone does when they are at home.

Our vision is that being in care feels natural and not like being in a system

Language used should be our language and not jargon which makes us feel unimportant.



*See appendix for full text of our vision



Foreword

From leaders...

We are passionate about ensuring Hertfordshire continues to be the county of opportunity for all, where everyone can achieve and share in its success. This includes our children and young people who are being brought up in the local authority's care, for whom we all hold corporate parenting responsibility. We are extremely proud of Hertfordshire's children in care and care leavers and committed to do all that we can to ensure they can access everything that the county has to offer and support them to feel accepted, safe and loved. This Corporate Parenting Strategy underpins our commitment to them and outlines how we can become the best corporate parents we can be. Central to this vision is bringing the whole council and community together so that we can all play a part in making this the best place for a child in our care to grow up in. This strategy underpins our commitment to champion Hertfordshire's children and young people and to ensure they feel supported; hopeful for the future and have every opportunity to live happy and fulfilling lives.

Lead Member

Fiona Thomson

Director of Children's Services

Jo Fisher

Chief Executive

Owen Mapley

Leader of the Council

Richard Roberts

Introduction

Corporate Parenting' is the collective responsibility of the Council and partner agencies to provide the best possible care, protection and support for children and young people who are 'Looked After', or are over the age of 18 and are qualifying or former relevant Care Leavers.

This collective responsibility was first laid out in the Children Act 1989, followed by The Leaving Care Act 2000. In addition, The Children & Social Work Act 2017 introduced a set of Corporate Parenting Principles for our children in care and care leavers up to the aged of 25. These underpin everything that we do:

- Act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of our children and young people
- Encourage our children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings, and always take them into account
- Make sure our children and young people have access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- Make sure children and young people are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work
- Promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for our children and young people
- Prepare our children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

This strategy describes Hertfordshire's approach on delivering on these principles to improve the lives of the children in and leaving our care. It outlines our vision and goals and sets out the governance structure and the context in which this strategy sits. The strategy is a result of conversations with our children and young people, who are the experts and their families and carers. This co-production has included the terminology used throughout this strategy:

- Young people voted to keep the current term Children Looked After
- Young people voted to keep the current term Care Leaver
- Young people gave a mixed vote in respect of the use of the word 'home' instead of 'placement'. This strategy therefore continues to use the word 'placement'
- Young people voted to use 'family time or' time with family' instead of 'contact'
- Young people voted to use 'family time supervisor' instead of 'contact supervisor'
- Young people voted to use 'sleepover' instead of 'respite'
- Young people voted to use 'meeting with young people' instead of 'CLA Review'

This Strategy sits alongside:

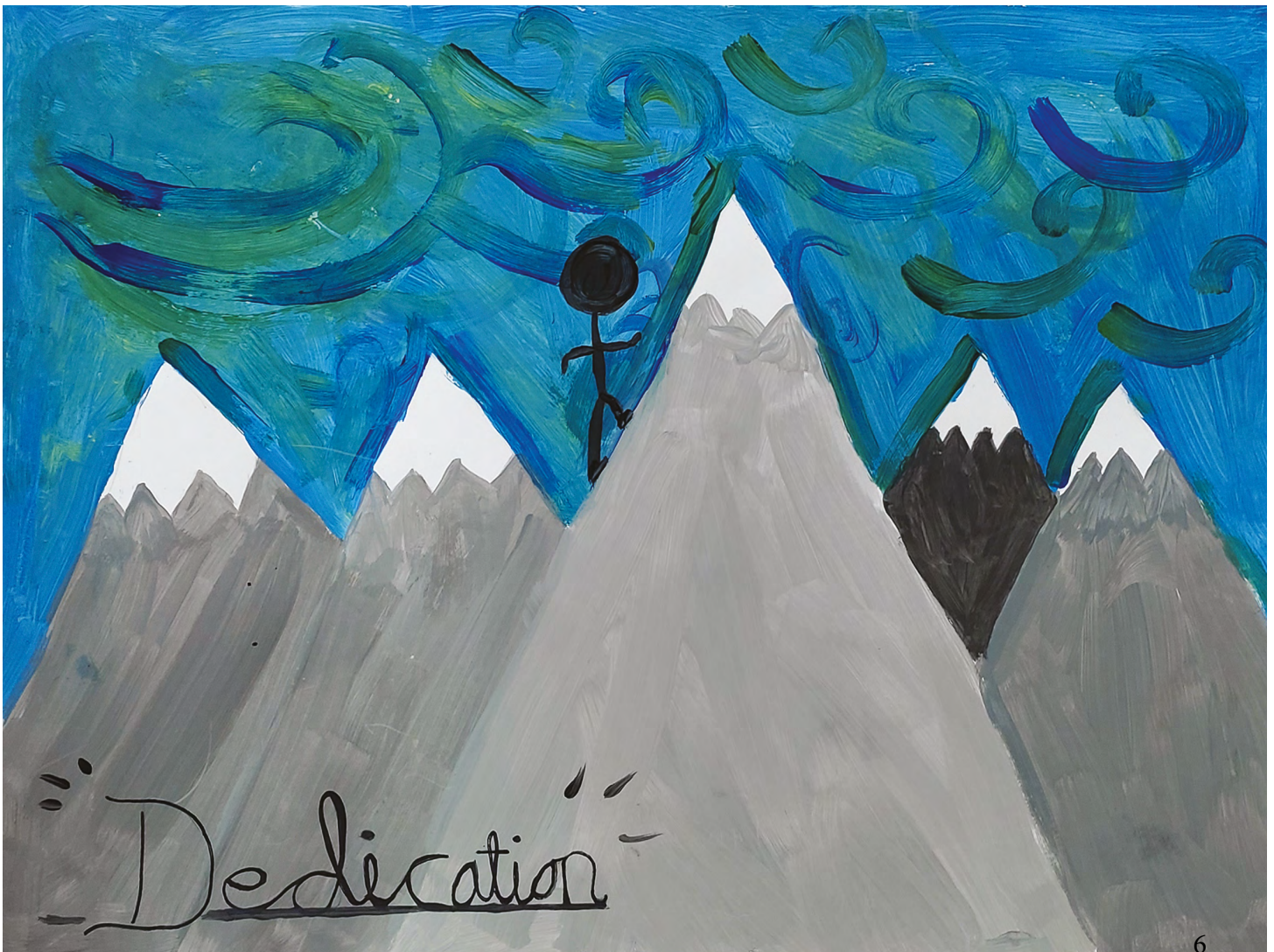
[Our Pledges](#) which confirm our promises to all our children and young people who are or have been looked after and is based on what children and young people in Hertfordshire said was important to them.

[Hertfordshire's Outcome Bees](#) which confirm how we measure achievements.

[The Joint Housing Protocol](#) - The vision of the joint housing protocol is that by working together, agencies will provide an effective coordinated service to prevent homelessness amongst families and young people, enable care leavers to move to appropriate accommodation in a planned manner and to enable these groups to access a range of services which enhance their life chances and ensure they can sustain independent accommodation. By working together the participants of this protocol aim to:

- Enable children and young people to remain living with their family wherever possible;
- Provide young people and families with the support and services they need to achieve positive outcomes;
- Treat young people and families with respect and understanding of their situation;
- Ensure young people and families have the right to freedom from abuse, neglect and hardship;

- Ensure young people and families have equal access to services, which meet their individual needs, whatever their race, gender, religion, disability, sexuality or family background;
- Ensure young people and families have their needs met, including their needs for housing, support, food, education and leisure;
- Ensure that young people in care make successful transition to independent living;
- Ensure young people and families are aware of their responsibilities with regard to their behaviour to abide by the rules and regulations governing any accommodation that is provided;
- Ensure young people are not subjected to numerous assessment processes and that they do not have to negotiate their own way through the broad range of agencies that support them.



Our Values

We are determined to learn from the lived experiences of children and young people so have incorporated the 9 key values our Children in Care Council have highlighted:

RESPECT

DEDICATION

PRIDE

LOYALTY

KINDNESS

HONESTY

LOVE

TRUST

FAIRNESS



Context

Hertfordshire's Children Looked After and Care Leavers... at a glance

*All figures from March 2021

Number of children
in our care

Hertfordshire

1030

England 80,050

Rate of Care
Hertfordshire

37.5
per
10,000

England 67 per 10,000

Number of
care leavers we
support

(aged 17-21)

Hertfordshire

953

England 44,550

Percentage of our children in care living out of
county and more than 20 miles from their home

Hertfordshire

24.5%

England 16%

Percentage of children in our care
living in foster families

Hertfordshire

67.8%

England - 71%

Percentage of our care
leavers (19-21) in education,
employment or training

Hertfordshire

54.7%

England 52%

Our Vision

We are committed to being effective, ambitious corporate parents by caring about (rather than for) our children in care and care leavers. We will achieve this by equipping the people who are privileged to parent our children with the right skills, knowledge and support and ensure we all work together to be strong advocates with high aspirations in order to prepare our children and young people with the skills needed to live a fulfilling, successful and rewarding life that is full of love.

We are proud to have established support from our key partners and a number of businesses in Hertfordshire who have begun to embrace the extended corporate family role for our children and young people. Our vision is to build on this collaborative work and forge new links within the community to make Hertfordshire the best place for children in care and those who are care experienced to live.

“One of our most fundamental obligations to children in care should be that they grow up and grow old with a strong loving tribe of people around them”

(Josh MacAlister, Independent Review of Children’s Social Care, 2021).



Our Approach

This strategy is part of an extensive range of activity that supports our overall shared aim to continue to improve support and opportunities for children in care and care leavers, including:

Voice of children and young people

We have a plan to make sure we are listening to children and young people's views at every opportunity, acting on their feedback and letting them know what we've done in response

Residential Strategy

We are working to increase the number of beds in residential homes in Hertfordshire, so that children needing this type of home can stay locally in Hertfordshire



Sufficiency Statement

We regularly review the homes we have available for our children in care, to make sure we have the right balance and there is as much choice as possible



Virtual School

We are working in partnership with schools; colleges and businesses, ensuring that children and young people in our care have the best possible education and every chance to realise their potential.

Lifelong Links

We use this approach to help children and young people to reconnect with family members and other trusted adults in a safe way. It can provide them with supportive, stable relationships during their time in care and beyond.

Joint Housing Protocol

We regularly review this agreement with our local Housing Authorities, to ensure we can work together to support our care leavers with their housing needs



Responding to Covid-19 pandemic

The pandemic led to an increase in children looked after in Hertfordshire, and we are working to understand this and make sure we are responding to this change in need change in need

Right children in care at the right time

We are constantly working to ensure that children only come into care when absolutely necessary, and are able to leave care at the earliest opportunity

One Team Fostering Strategy

We are aiming to increase the number of in-house foster carers in Hertfordshire, so that more children in our care can stay in homes with local foster carers



SEND Strategy and Transformation

We are working to transform the way we support children with special educational needs and disabilities and their families, including those who are looked after

Permanency

We are setting up new systems that will help us to ensure that children in our care are able to find permanent homes as soon as possible.






Mental Health Emotional Wellbeing

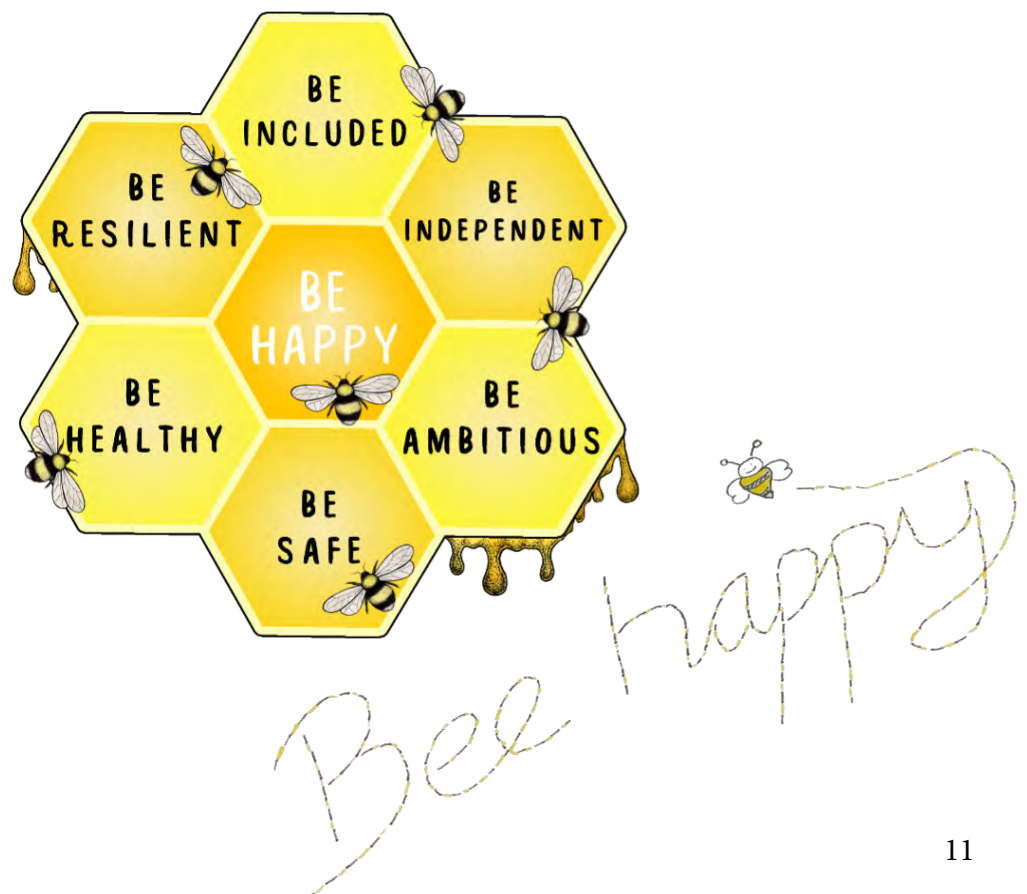
A whole system programme to improve the mental health of children in, and leaving care is underway. Partners are working together on projects to increase collaboration, consistency, capacity and compassion.

The Hertfordshire Model

We have a single-vision Outcome Framework known as the 'Outcome Bees', which have been developed with the involvement of young people and partner organisations to ensure those things which are most important to children and young people are identified and delivered. The outcomes are inter-linked with all the 'bees' being important for the child or young person. This framework enables us to set clear targets across the seven domains to measure how we are meeting our commitment to Children and young people in Care and Care leavers.

In addition, our model involves:

-  Continually working to ensure that the right children and young people are in our care at the right time, in a home that meets their needs - **Be safe / be happy**
-  A commitment to building and maintaining good relationships with children and young people's families and extended families. This helps us to fully understand the children in our care and their needs, and also allows us to be ready to support young people to return to their families in future if this becomes possible – **Be included / be independent**
-  A trauma informed approach that understands the impact that children's early experiences can have on them, and provides support to help them deal with this – **Be resilient**
-  Taking every opportunity to understand and support the emotional wellbeing of all children and young people in care and their families – **Be healthy / be happy**
-  A commitment to promote high quality education and training pathways that enable success and opportunities for progression – **Be ambitious**



Governance

The Local Government Association issued a "Corporate parenting resource pack" in November 2019, this document set out advice to Councillors on their responsibility as corporate parents. The document set out one very good question "What if it were my child?. As corporate parents within Hertfordshire we will remember this question and always consider this when supporting our children, young people and care leavers.

Level 3: Leaders of the Council

Leader of the Council

Executive Member for Children,
Young people and Families

Chief Executive

Executive Director
of Children's Services

- provide leadership across the authority in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of CLA and care leavers
- ensure arrangements are in place to implement any key policy decisions in this regard
- ensure that there is an in-depth understanding of the needs of the Council's CLA and care leavers and that this informs service improvement
- ensure that effective governance arrangements are in place to implement any decisions regarding CLA and care leavers across the partnership
- ensure that the strategic plans of Children's Services and joint plans with partner agencies meet the needs of CLA and care leavers

Level 2: Targeted Responsibility

Children & Young
People Panel

Scrutiny

Hertfordshire
Safeguarding Board

Strategic
Management Board

Corporate
Parenting Board

Children's Services
Managers & Officers

- are aware of relevant issues including safeguarding and health, and know the expectations regarding services for children in care and care leavers.
- have access to qualitative and quantitative information about services and outcomes for children and young people and are able to evaluate this information
- consider how they are going to hear the voice of the child / young person and take action, in conjunction with managers and other agencies, to improve services
- ensure with senior managers across the council and its partner agencies, that improving outcomes for this group of children is a consideration in all decision making
- ensure the Council and partner agencies work together to improve the service and respond to changing needs
- know what our CLA and care leavers think of the services provided for them.

Level 1: Universal Responsibility

All Elected
Members

All County
Council Officers

All District & Borough Councils
(Officers and Members)

All other partners including
health, school, Police

The local community including businesses,
charities & community groups

These groups should understand: the needs of our CLA and why they need to be looked after ; the profile of CLA and the outcomes they are achieving compared with other local children; their responsibility for promoting the welfare of CLA and Care Leavers. Elected members and officers should:

- be sure that we are providing the best possible care for our CLA and care leavers asking, 'would it be good enough for our children?'
- be aware of and, where relevant, implement 'the pledge' to CLA and care leavers
- know what is most important to our children and young people in care and care leavers



Working Together

Our aim is to work in partnership with all County Council departments and other organisations, partner agencies and a dedicated team of multi-agency professionals to support all children and young people in our care and care leavers to meet their individual needs so that they can achieve their full potential.



How Everyone can become involved in Our Exciting Life Changing Plan

We know that businesses and the voluntary sector in Hertfordshire share our ambitions for our children and young people and want to help so listed below are some key suggestions that could really make a difference:

- 1** Become a Fostering friendly employer by implementing a fostering friendly HR policy for all foster carers in your employment
- 2** Support Project Positive and offer apprenticeship and work opportunities to children in care and care leavers.
- 3** Pledge access to your organisations cultural, sport, leisure facilities at low or no cost.
- 4** Work with us to create practical, specific offers that your organisation could make to support care leavers aged 16-25

Our Priorities

Identity:

Children and young people have a strong sense of self, and a clear understanding of their story.



Bee Included

Positive relationships:

Children and young people feel loved, safe and are supported to maintain significant relationships and a sense of belonging.



Bee Resiliant



Education, Training and Employment:

Children and young people hold high aspirations and are supported to access the best learning opportunities.



Bee Ambitious

Emotional Health and Wellbeing:

Ensure children and young people are physically and emotionally as well as they can be.



Bee healthy

Home and Housing:

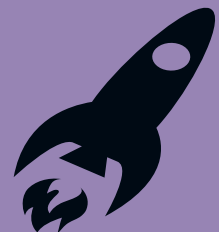
Children and young people gain a sense of belonging from where they live as part of a family and community



Bee Safe

Being in care offers opportunities and equips children to live a successful life:

Ensure young people are safe; settled and well-equipped to face adversity and life's challenges



Bee Independant

Ensuring all of the above are achieved will lead to our children looked after and care leavers Beeing HAPPY



Bee Happy



Positive relationships:

We know in Hertfordshire that:

- The vast majority of our children and young people in care trust the adults they live with and trust their Social Worker.
- More than three quarters (77%) of children in our care regularly talk to their carers about things that matter to them. This is 10% greater than their peers in the general population and 7% greater than children (70%) looked after in other local authorities.
- Most of our children in care (93%) have at least one good friend.
- Just under 50% of our children in care feel that they have the right amount of family time with their siblings, however most expressed how they wanted to spend more time with their families.

	OUTCOME INDICATOR	Baseline (New Belongings 2020 / Bright Spots 2021)
Positive Relationships	Increase the number of children in care that feel they have the right level of family time.	50%
	Reduce the number of care leavers who report they do not have a trusted person in their life	9%

Establishing trusting relationships and working alongside children, young people and families is central to our work. We will continue to prioritise network building so children in care and care leavers have safe and consistent relationships to guide and support them through to adulthood. We will continue to prioritise stability and reduce to a minimum any unnecessary change in children's lives.

You said:

'I'd like to know that this family are going to let me stay until I am 18.'

'I don't feel like I am in care living where I am because I am happy here.'

'I would like to see more consistency with the social worker.'

She has been my rock with advice & answering any questions I may have thrown her way, she doesn't just do the job because it is her job but she makes me feel like she really cares.

'I trust him (worker) completely and he has helped me come a long way in the short time we have known each other.'

'A key feature of wellbeing is trust and this is what we want from the relationship we have with those that care for us. Being able to talk to someone without being scared.'

We will:

We will continue to prioritise helping children and young people to stay connected to those that they love throughout their childhood and into adulthood.

Co-produce with young people standards for workers and be very clear about what a young person should expect from a worker.

Co-produce with young people a new Pathway Plan that asks about who young people feel they can trust and go to in a crisis.

Work to identify opportunities for additional help available to care leavers such as ensuring former carers are clear that they can stay in touch with young people once left and that this message is clear at all stages to include the recruitment of foster carers, supervision and support groups.



Identity

We know that in Hertfordshire

- 57% of our children aged 8-11yrs want to know more about the reasons they are in care, which is higher than children looked after in other local authorities (33%).
- Most (86%) of children in our care report that 'all or most of the time' they did similar things to their friends.
- About one fifth (19%) of our care leavers report 'very high' overall life satisfaction. In comparison, about one third (32%) of young people in the general population aged 16-24yrs report 'very high' levels.
- Nearly a quarter of our care leavers report 'low' life satisfaction.

	OUTCOME INDICATOR	Baseline (New Belongings 2020 / Bright Spots 2021)
Identity	Increase the number of children in care that feel they know enough about the reasons why they are in care	57%
	Reduce the number of Care Leavers in Hertfordshire who report low levels of life satisfaction.	24%

We recognise the diverse backgrounds of our children in care and care leavers and the importance of them understanding their history, where they have come from and what they can achieve. We therefore want to get better at helping our children strengthen their sense of identity

You said:

'I have met a very good friend who has a very positive impact on my life and helps me to make the right choices.'

I'm not really stable and it makes me un-motivated and lots of things go south cos I've my mood swings and stuff.

'Life as a young person in care is hard. You get labelled and stereotyped just because you are in care. The image of children looked after has been tarnished for so long that the labelling and stereotypes can have an effect on people. A positive message needs to be spread nationwide to counter claims such as looked after kids have anger problems, druggies etc.'

'I get treated differently at school compared to everyone else. I always feel different and that I can't fit in sometimes.'

We will:

Promote and celebrate the many achievements of children in our care and care leavers with them and within the partnership.

Give children in our care as many opportunities as possible to ask questions about their past and ensure we answer them.

Give care leavers more access to social and learning activities within their community, such as gym memberships, apprenticeships, and employment. This will help to improve their overall life satisfaction.

Ringfence apprenticeship & employment opportunities for care leavers within Hertfordshire County Council 'the family business'.



Emotional Health and Wellbeing:

We know that in Hertfordshire that:

- 93% of children in our care report high levels of life satisfaction compared to 85% of children looked after in other local authorities. However, only 19% of our care leavers report high levels of life satisfaction compared with 32% in the general population.
- 80% of children in our care are positive about their future compared to 64% of children looked after in other local authorities.
- 10% of children in our care report that they felt unhappy yesterday compared to 19% of children looked after in other local authorities.
- 26% of our care leavers have low levels of happiness, which is more than the general population (8%).
- 90% of children aged 4-7yrs, 94% of children aged 8-11yrs and 95% of young people 11-18yrs thought their carers noticed how they were feeling 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.

<i>Emotional Health and Wellbeing</i>	<i>OUTCOME INDICATOR</i>	<i>Baseline (New Belongings 2020 / Bright Spots 2021)</i>
	Reduce the number of Care Leavers who report high levels of anxiety the previous day	42%
Increase the number of care leavers who report high levels of life satisfaction	19%	

A whole system programme to improve the mental health of children in, and leaving care is underway in Hertfordshire. A dedicated officer has been appointed to lead on this. Partners from across Children's Social Care, Health and Mental Health services are working together on projects to increase collaboration, consistency, capacity, and compassion.

One of the projects has involved professionals from across all services and the Children In Care Council agreeing on a set of outcomes that we all want to work towards in order to improve children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. A data dashboard is being developed with more than 50 indicators for us to see how we are doing against these.

The ten outcomes are:

- 1.** Children & young people get help at times when things are particularly tricky, such as when moving placement or when there's a crisis
- 2.** Children & young people get help to build a strong sense of their identity and understand why they are in care
- 3.** Children & young people have access to different kinds of help that focuses on your needs, is flexible and available when you need it
- 4.** The services and professionals that support children and young people work together
- 5.** Children young people experience placements and help that is stable and steady
- 6.** Children and young people get help and advice about all their needs including healthy eating, exercise and sleep which is important for your mental health
- 7.** Children and young people are involved in decisions about them and know how to look after their mental health
- 8.** Children and young people have good relationships and feel safe
- 9.** Children and young people are mentally healthy
- 10.** The professionals, parents and carers supporting children and young people can get help and advice so they can do their best

You said:

'There is a blurriness about what workers can and should do for young people. Some workers take young people to meetings and support them, but some workers say they can't do that. It needs to be clear exactly what workers can and can't do.'

'I want a toolkit of things on offer including apps that can help and ways to flip to more positive thinking.'

'After I left care, I had my foster carer there and their support was more important than my worker.'

'I often struggle with anxiety and do not have the best confidence in myself, I'm not always sure who to go to for mental health support as the doctors aren't always helpful but I have learnt to deal with anxiety from previous therapists.'

'Our emotional and mental health is as important as our physical health. More than food, more than water, more than a home, more than electricity. I want to stop feeling so raw.'

We will:

Help workers and carers understand what helps at different levels of need, what they can do and what other information or services might also help.

Develop a Young Adult Mental Health Service that considers the needs of care leavers.

Help workers to have meaningful conversations with children and young people about their mental health and give them tools to understand this better.

Review how mental health experts can support social care professionals more closely to help them to work in a therapeutically informed way.

Develop a trauma informed practice strategy to help all services and professionals help children and young people that have experienced trauma or adversity in a consistent way.

The Children in Care Council will create posters about self help and promote these among the children in care community



Education, Training and Employment:

We know that in Hertfordshire:

- 89% of the children in our care aged 11-18yrs like school or college ‘a lot’ or ‘a bit’, which is a significantly bigger proportion than in the general population (80%) and children looked after in other local authorities (78%).
- Compared to young people in the general population, care leavers in Hertfordshire are over twice as likely to report financial difficulties.
- 87% of care leavers reported having goals and plans for their future, but 28 (13%) did not.
- 41% of care leavers aged 19-21yrs are recorded as NEET. (DfE, 2019)

	OUTCOME INDICATOR	Baseline (New Belongings 2020 / Bright Spots 2021)
Employment, Education and Training.	Increase the number of Care leavers in Education, Employment or Training (age 19-21)	46.8% (227)
	Increase the number of care leavers that report having goals and plans for their future	87%

We want to make positive changes for our children in care and care leavers to ensure that every one of them feel that they have somewhere to learn and develop in a setting that’s right for them, and supports their personal development, as well as their educational attainment.

You said:

‘Struggled this summer just gone as was unable to get a job because of COVID. Feel like I could have done with extra financial support in this time’

‘Should this not be part of pathway planning? All young people need to have goals and have help to set them. Also workshops provided by Virtual School to raise aspirations and give young people inspiration’

‘Not got a job but would love one’

‘It’s hard when you’re not working but if you have family around you find you are able to survive. Since I have started working I am able to start saving for my future and am able to budget my bills and leisure etc’.

‘A lot more should be done to inspire care leavers – they don’t get aspirations from family. Care leavers need to hear much more from care leavers who have succeeded – there should be success stories on VS website and going to Uni should be normalised for care leavers’.

‘So excited - Waiting for an interview for an apprenticeship’

We will:

Develop our local offer with young people, ensuring it details the additional funding and support available to care leavers (such the £1000 apprenticeship bursary) and that this is branded to make it more meaningful for care leavers.

Embed further recognition of corporate parenting responsibility across all relevant organisations to support the development of opportunities specifically designed for care leavers incorporating awareness of the need for increased flexibility to enable success.

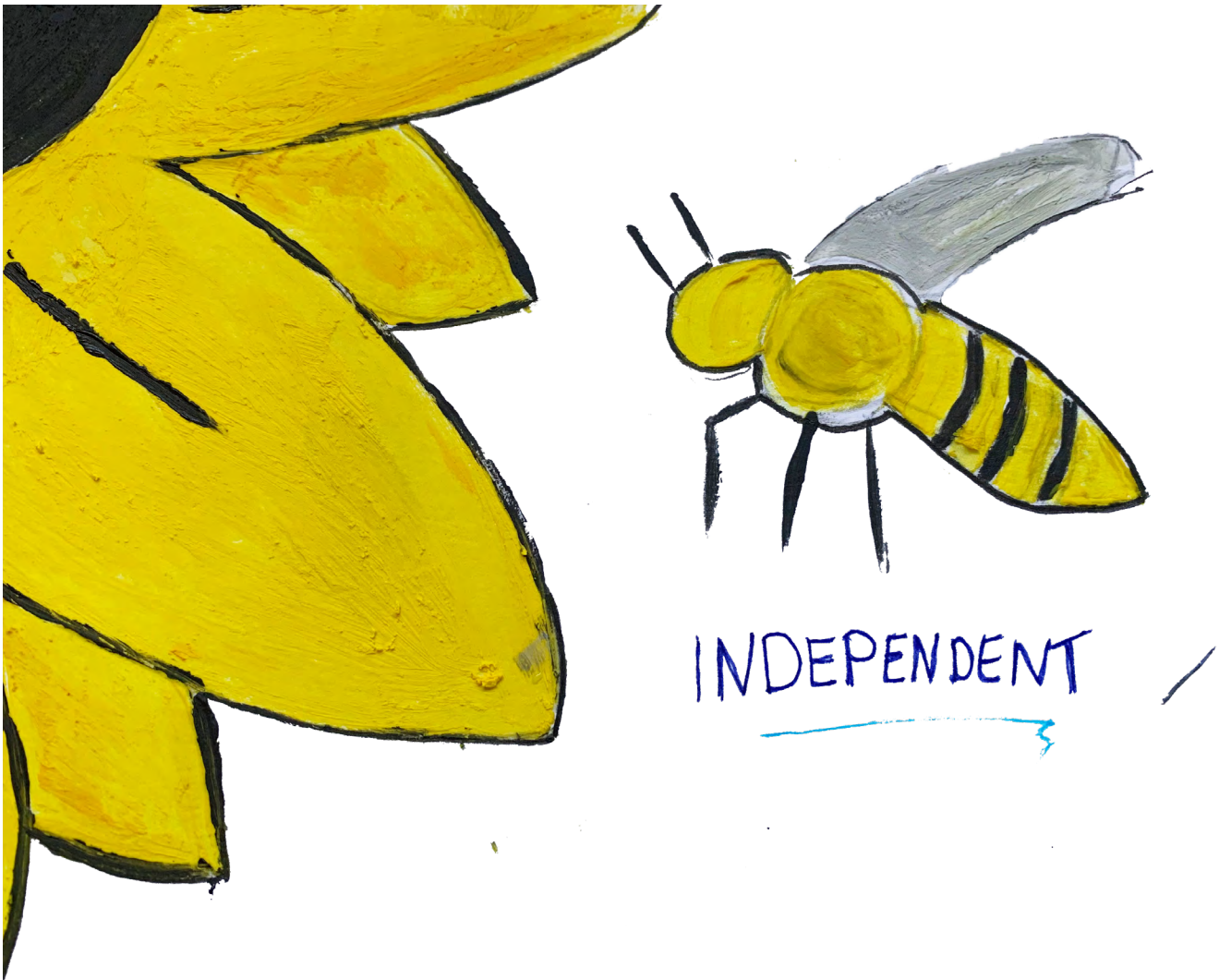
Develop our range of in-house 'ring fenced' opportunities for work experience (restrictions permitting) training, apprenticeships and employment for care leavers in the local authority.

Produce inspiring Podcasts, animations and films with young people to celebrate success. We will also collate and publish the success stories of Care Leavers promoting their successful transition to adulthood - Project Positive.

Regularly gain feedback from care leavers to check that they are satisfied with the support they receive in relation to their employment and work skills

Track and monitor the employment needs of our care leavers including those who are NEET and actively seek out opportunities to match the needs and aspirations of the group.

Re-design with care leavers the Hertfordshire Pathway Plan to include aspirations and life goals i.e. owning their own home, owning a pet, going on an adventure.



Home and Housing:

We know that in Hertfordshire:

- 95% of children in our care (4-18yrs), including all of the youngest children (4-7yrs), felt safe where they lived compared to 90% of children looked after in other local authorities.
- 100% of children aged 4-7yrs and 87% of young people (11-18yrs) felt settled where they lived compared to 78% of children and young people looked after in other local authorities.
- 25% of care leavers did not think their current accommodation was right for them - a higher proportion than is reported in official care leaver statistics for Hertfordshire, where just 11% were considered to be living in unsuitable accommodation
- A significant number of our care leavers complain generally about the temporary nature, size, cleanliness, cost or location of their housing. Some said they were residing with or near people they did not want to be around. Several expressed concerns about the safety of their accommodation.

	<i>OUTCOME INDICATOR</i>	Baseline (New Belongings 2020 / Bright Spots 2021)
<i>Home / Housing</i>	Increase the number of Care leavers that answer, 'mainly yes' to the question 'Is where you live now right for you?'	75%
	Increase the number of children in our care that feel safe and settled.	95%
	Increase the number of children in our care that live in local in-house foster homes	361 (as at August 2021)

We want to offer children stability; choice and the opportunity to maintain relationships locally. We need to be able to place our children in well-matched local homes near their schools, colleges, work and communities.

You said:

'Seeing the place you're moving to first would help whether placement; hostel; flat; supported lodgings or semi-independent.'

'I'm just glad to be renting. We were homeless for ages in temporary accommodation and sofa surfing. Having my own flat is amazing and feels like a massive step in life.'

'I am not happy with where I am living, I have a bidding number, but I am not getting anywhere. I am being provided with a bed but its not suitable to sleep on. I have been moved and I didn't want to move. This is making me disappointed. If I had a permanent somewhere to live I could do so many things with my life that are not possible at the moment.'

We will:

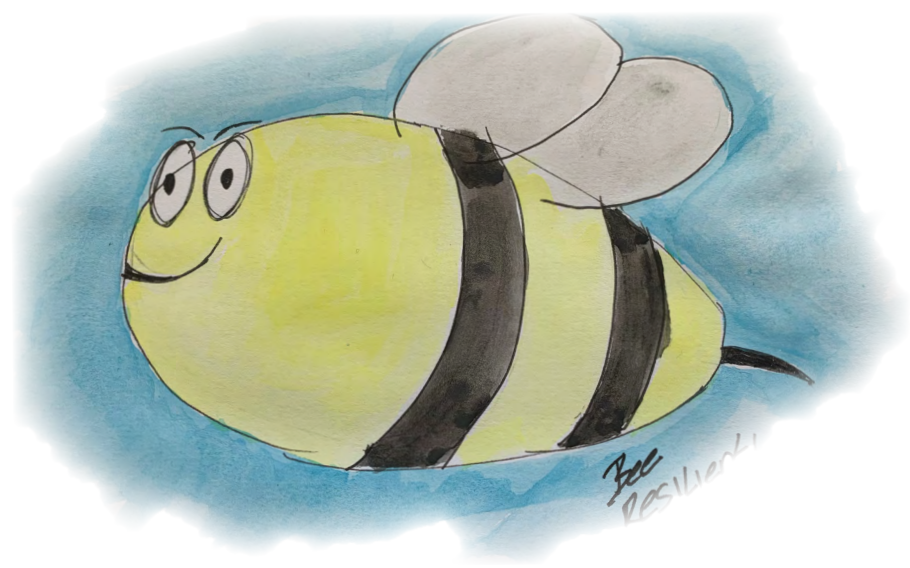
Ensure we continue to develop our own children's homes and increase the number of foster carers in Hertfordshire.

Continue to develop our Mockingbird hubs to increase our fostering supportive communities.

Ensure a system is in place to support care leavers at point of tenancy sign up and Intervene early if care leavers are at risk of tenancy breakdown. This will include ensuring care leavers are given the opportunity to see accommodation prior to moving and checking with the young person if they feel safe.

Ensure clear information is available which sets out how and what care leavers can do if they are unhappy about their accommodation which will include information regarding their options such as social housing transfers.

Develop films and podcasts to explain how housing works for care leavers in Hertfordshire.



Being in care offers opportunities and equips children to live a successful life

We know that in Hertfordshire:

- 77% of young people in our care (11-18yrs) thought that they were given opportunities to show they could be trusted all or most of the time and 19% were given this 'sometimes'.
- 98% of young people in our care thought that the adults they lived with showed an interest in their education 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'. This is greater proportion than their peers in the general population (90%).
- 97% of young people in our care got to practise life skills which is more than young people looked after in other local authorities (89%)
- 98% of young people in our care aged 11-18yrs reported that they had access to the Internet where they lived compared to 91% young people looked after in other local authorities,
- 98% of young people in our care spend time outdoors at least once a week compared to young people looked after in other local authorities (88%).

	OUTCOME INDICATOR	Baseline (New Belongings 2020 / Bright Spots 2021)
Care Opportunities and Successful Transitions	Increase the number of care leavers that answer 'mainly yes' to the question 'is where you live now right for you'	75%
	Decrease the number of care leavers that answer 'often or always' to the question 'In the last few weeks how often have you felt lonely'	19%

We want all our children in care and care leavers to be able to access the same or better opportunities than their peers. We are committed to supporting a smooth transition to adulthood.

You said:

'Leaving care was a very hard part of my life for me. I was a little prepared but not as much as I would have liked'.

'I feel like I'm being kept in the place I currently live rather than being allowed to travel to see friends and family'.

'A clearer plan of the years ahead of when you leave care. At the point I left care everything seemed OK but the plan wasn't followed through, I felt a bit left out. I was lucky as I had support, but I imagine for others it would be hard. My PA seemed like they were doing their job, but I didn't there was a connection.'

'Encourage volunteering more it helps with depression, being around other people but I personally am forever grateful to HCC for the support I have gotten till now'.

'I wish I was less restricted with things such as phone or internet. I feel like I know how to behave safely online and want to be able to prove this to my carer.'

'Its definitely something that you worry about with not having the person you'd normally ask for help with there. But they do give you lots of information and leaflets on other support agencies available'.

We will:

Ensure that preparing for adulthood starts at the earliest opportunity and will work with young people and their carers to ensure that this is a priority.

Ensure that every opportunity is taken to support young people to build lifelong relationships, both with their families and within their communities.

Work with our housing colleagues to ensure that accommodation options meet the needs of our care leavers.

We will continue to offer an event on Christmas day to ensure no care leaver is alone.

To find out more about fostering in Hertfordshire [click here](#)



Appendices

Young People's Vision (in full)

Our vision is that the experience of coming into care should be as planned and natural as possible and not traumatic. There should always be an open door for young people to ask questions and be given honest answers. Reasons and explanations should be given as many times as needed, and in more detail as we grow older. We should always be given the opportunity to speak privately and confidentially.

Our vision is for all young people in care and care leavers to feel happy with their lives. To feel comfortable where they live, like anyone does when they are at home. To know that the people looking after them love and understand them, and are a good match in terms of BAME, LGBTQ, culture, identity and interests, with young people being able to choose who they are matched with if possible. Carer's profiles should be used for this. If it is not possible to match, our vision is that all carers are knowledgeable, sensitive and understanding about BAME issues and LGBTQ issues and know where to go for support.

Our vision is that being in care feels natural and not like being in a system. Forms and meetings should be kept to a minimum. Language used should be our language and not jargon which makes us feel unimportant.

Our vision is that being in care should always be better than the situation young people were removed from, or what is the point? Once in care and in a situation they are happy with, young people should not have to move.

Our vision is that a childhood in care is as good as or better than anyone else's childhood. Being in care should never put you at a disadvantage. In care, young people should have opportunities to find things they like and are interested in and that help them develop. Including things like Guides, sports/exercise, extra-curricular activities, CHICC, going to University etc.

Our vision is that our feelings are noticed and respected and that everyone understands it is not surprising if we feel angry, sad or scared. People who care for us should understand that some situations affect young people in different ways. Our carers and workers should be able to look beyond 'misbehaviour' to what might be behind this. We should feel that those who care for us are on our side. We want to be helped to work on our feelings so that we can move on from them and become the best that we can be - when we leave care we should be confident in all our relationships.

The Children in Care Council (CHICC)

CHICC is run by and for young people in care and care leavers in Hertfordshire.

The purpose of the CHICC is to listen to the views of young people and help improve being in care. There are three main groups within CHICC:

- Junior CHICC (7-11 years)
- The Deputies (12-18 years)
- Care Leavers group (18+)

CHICC organise regular events and activities where young people can share their views and meet others who understand what it is like to be in care. They also meet regularly with senior managers including the Director and Lead Member for Children's Services to put young people's views forward and agree what needs to change.

More information about CHICC can be found at the following link:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/in-care/chicc/children-in-care-councilchicc.aspx>

- The development of 'Top 10 Tips' for social workers on how to work with young people
- Improving the way young people are referred to, ensuring a focus on positive things
- Ensuring refreshments are available for young people at review meetings
- Developing guidance for carers of teenagers
- Helping to change policy so that young people in residential care can stay in touch with previous workers
- Monitoring private residential homes, crash pads and semi-independent accommodation
- Running a Christmas appeal for care leavers