

CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY

2020-2023

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Foreword

Looking after and protecting all children and young people within the borough is one of the most important jobs that we do. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined our responsibility as a corporate parent for the first time in law.

Being a corporate parent means providing secure, nurturing and positive experiences for children and young people in our care and care experienced young people. Where a child or young person can't safely stay at home, it's up to us to provide them with the care, support and stability that they deserve.

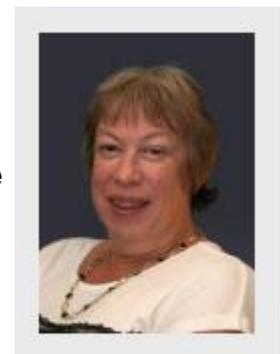
Public Service Partners have a shared responsibility to act for the children and young people in our care as a parent would for their own child. Those partners come together with young people as a Corporate Parenting Board. Our responsibilities involve considering the impact on the young people within our care when services are being reviewed, when reports are being received and when gathering feedback. We should all be considering:

“What if this were my child?”

Each young person within our care is unique and will require different support specifically to meet their needs and allow them to reach their full potential. It is important to recognise this individuality and the need for tailored services.

In Sandwell we are committed to listening to the young people and children who are, or have been, in our care so that we can ensure that their needs are at the centre of everything that we do. It is important that we value the experiences of each young person within our care and so the priorities outlined within this strategy were agreed after consultation with a representative group of our young people.

Cllr Joyce Underhill
Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life
Corporate Parenting Board Co-Chair



About the Strategy

In Sandwell, all partners share a commitment to creating opportunities that ensure that the children and young people in our care are encouraged to reach their full potential by empowering them and promoting positive outcomes.

This strategy sets out how we plan to further improve the services offered within Sandwell, both for the children currently in our care and for our care experienced young people.

The strategy is underpinned by the 10 messages that steer the work of Sandwell Council's Corporate Parenting Board within the Corporate Parenting Pledge. These were adopted based on the Pledge drawn up from the messages delivered by over 150 Care Experienced people at the Care Experienced Conference 2019.

Sandwell
 Metropolitan Borough Council

Corporate Parenting Pledge

The 10 messages that will steer our work:

- 1 We need more love in the care system, including displays of positive physical affection.
- 2 We want to be seen as individuals worthy of respect much more than we are.
- 3 Relationships are critically important to us.
- 4 Instability and loss of continuity in our lives is made worse through no fault of ours by pressure in the care system.
- 5 Mental health and well-being are our biggest worries and the most important and urgent things that have to improve.
- 6 The impacts of the care experience do not end at 18, or 21, or even 25.
- 7 Our sense of who we are is important. Our family, heritage and history are uniquely ours and must be protected.
- 8 Having our say is essential.
- 9 We have legal rights and entitlements and we are not always being told what they are.
- 10 Nobody knows more about what it means to be in care than we do.

Icons at the bottom: Star, Heart, Wrench, Graduation Cap, Scales, Train, House, Family, Microscope, Medal.

As Corporate Parents, we have pledged to:

- Support the principles which underpin the Top Ten Messages and apply these to the way our services are planned and delivered in the future;
- Use our position as local system leaders for children to change things for the better;
- Use the Top Ten Messages to drive improvement in our local arrangements; and
- Invite Care Experienced people to feedback the extent to which the pledge is upheld.

Alongside the pledge, Sandwell's Vision 2030 sets ambitions for a thriving, optimistic and resilient community. This vision shapes the work within all of the partner organisations and steers us in the direction of high aspirations; healthy lives; rewarding jobs; high quality education and safe communities.

This document outlines our vision, priorities and work streams that are in place to support our children in care and our care experienced young people. The strategy is presented as a high-level strategic overview of the various pieces of work that are on-going. The Strategy is supported by an active action plan that is regularly monitored by the Corporate Parenting Board.

Our Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People



Our young people leading sessions with some of our Directors on Youth Takeover Day 2019.



*Racism is a problem that we all need to fix
We need to put our ideas together to let them mix
Racism isn't good, and it's not very smart
I'd end it if I could because it stinks worse than a fart
Racism is wrong it doesn't make you bad
It doesn't take long make people really sad
Racist people are missing out on lots of good things
Like foods, music, hobbies and all the joy that they bring
Racism is for bullies it happens too much in schools
Racism isn't funny and racism isn't cool
Experiencing racism can be very emotional
Racism is something that is very antisocial
No one likes racism, we need to stop it now
Love and forgiveness are the only way how*

*Felt like a failure all of my life
But that's ok considering the strife
They say fall down 7, stand up 8
But I have fallen down a lot more as of late*

*Went to go and get my degree
But it really wasn't for me
Always wanted to be a teacher
But I have struggles saying nice to meet ya*

*Recently went to Budapest
When I say this it's with my whole heart
It really was the best
The whole city was a work of art*

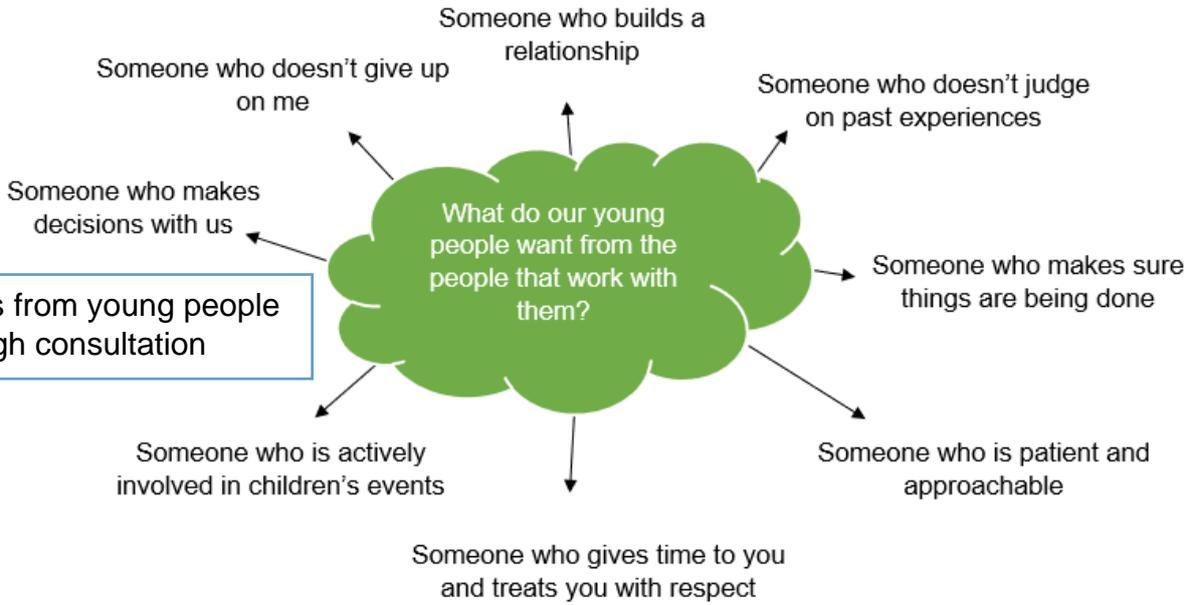
*A city full of history
Maybe I will go back to university
Yes the world is full of strife
But I won't let that be my life*

Some of our Care Experienced young people leading a Housing Select Committee meeting.



Some of our young people with Deputy Mayor Cllr Hartwell at our Care Leavers Awards Evening 2019.





Thinking people are talking about me
 All while I'm just trying to be
 Sometimes when I'm feeling low
 It can suddenly stop my life's flow
 Medication is a pill that helps my mood
 When I'm stressed I tend to turn to food
 Anxiety can make people feel suicidal
 Emotions come in waves that can be tidal

2019 Christmas meal for our Care Experienced young people.



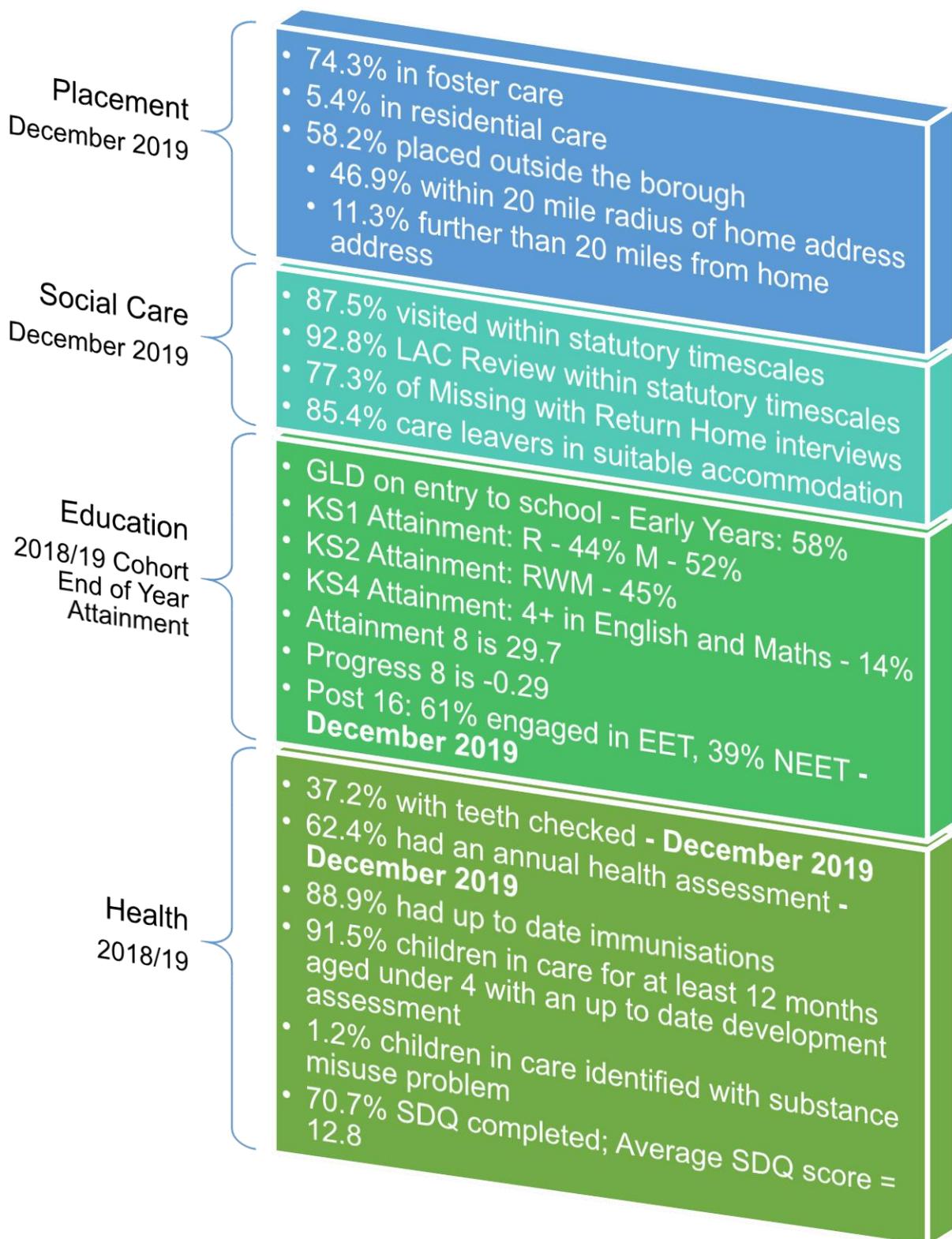
Our young people leading on Staff Inductions at Sandwell Children's Trust.



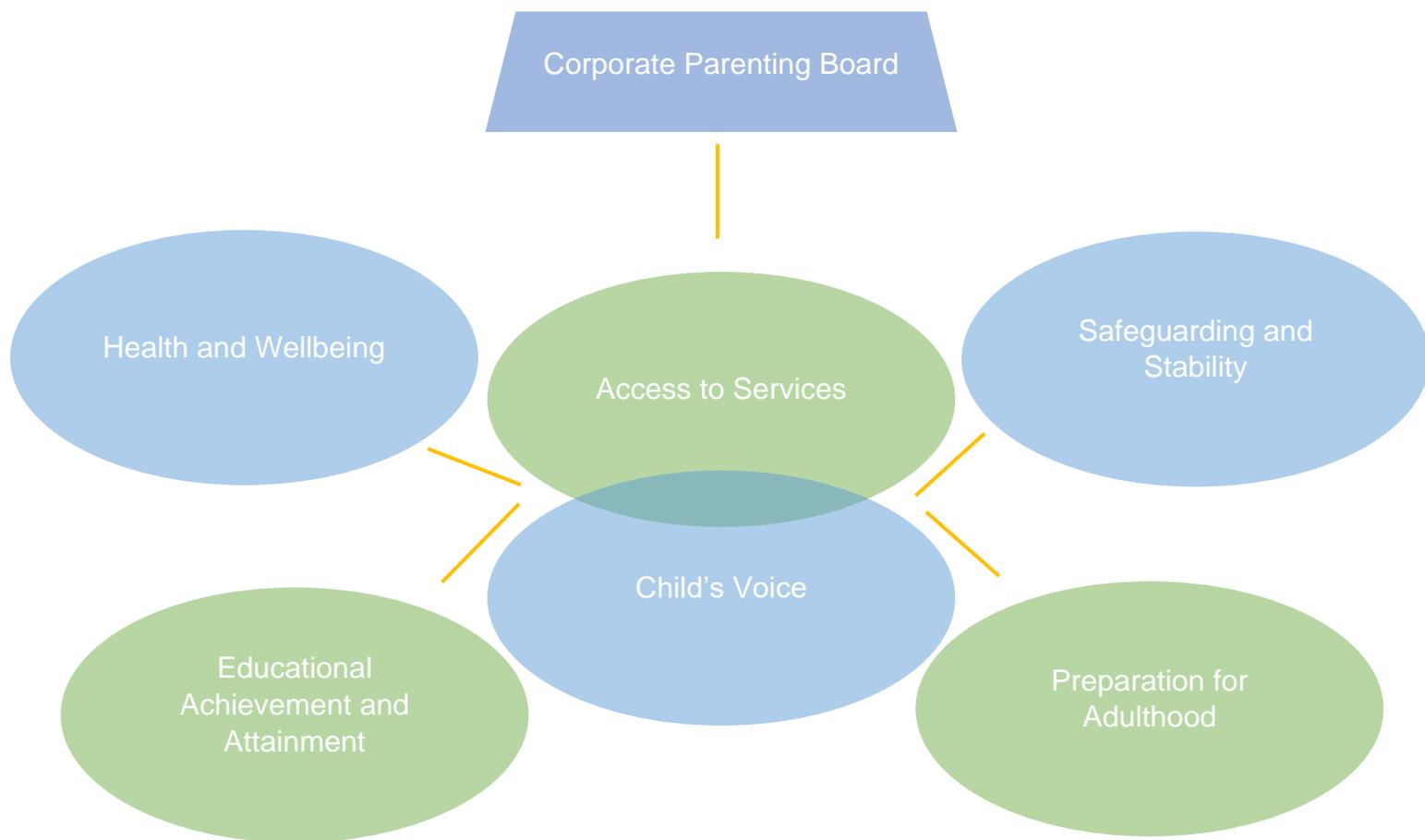
Our young people and Corporate Parenting Board after signing Sandwell's Corporate Parenting Pledge.

*I'm really really scared
 Of people finding out I'm in care
 For this I would get selected to bully
 Some people would even find it funny
 I feel like my mom has dumped me
 Although I have a nice carer, luckily
 When it comes to social workers I've had over 3
 They just decide to leave and make like a tree
 Out of the whole school, only two of us are in care
 It's a secret situation so that people won't stand & stare
 I find that most of the meetings a really boring bore
 I'd rather be at home on FIFA trying my best to score
 Some kids don't look like their carers and it really shows
 Out of all my friends at school only one of them knows*

Headline Data



Corporate Parenting Board



We know all of our children and young people are unique, with individual needs and circumstances. Through our Corporate Parenting Board and various young people's Forums, we work closely with our young people to understand their needs and ensure that their voice is at the centre of everything that we do.

Our Corporate Parenting Board is underpinned by the 7 Corporate Parenting Principles identified by the Children and Social Work Act (2017), these Principles have been broken down to the workstreams identified above. The work completed within each workstream is co-ordinated through the Corporate Parenting Board with regular feedback to the young people's Forums where necessary, allowing our young people to be actively involved, provide feedback and challenge and hold their Corporate Parents to account for any commitments that are made.

Our Corporate Parenting Board is a platform for our young people, councillors, Council officers and partners to join together to discuss the important issues, to celebrate achievements and share ambitions for the future. It is accountable to the Full Council of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and is strategically placed to ensure that the council effectively fulfils its role as Corporate Parent for all children

and young people in its care. The Board is co-chaired by the Council's Lead Member for Children's Services and the Chair of the Care Leavers' Forum.

The Corporate Parenting Board aims to ensure the delivery of the seven national Corporate Parenting Principles (2018):

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Meetings of the board are separated into business and engagement sessions. This structure aims to encourage active participation from our young people.

Engagement sessions are facilitated by our young people and aim to approach issues that are important to them at that moment in time. The sessions give our young people the opportunity to have important conversations with their Corporate Parents about the things that matter the most to them. Whilst business sessions are the platform for key partners to present any issues that require a decision or an action or provide relevant information to the board and our young people.

For our Corporate Parenting Board, success will mean that we feel confident as Corporate Parents that we are working towards delivering every national principle within each identified workstream. It will also mean that we are able to evidence where we have taken into account the views, wishes and feelings of the young people in, and previously in, our care.

Participation

We are committed to promoting the active participation of children, young people and their families wherever possible in Sandwell. Participation is the process by which individuals can actively influence decision-making and encourage change. This influence can range from having input into their own care plans, to helping develop and implement service delivery. Children and young people in Sandwell who wish to participate in any way are supported to do so, with guidance from the Participation Team within Sandwell Children's Trust.

In Sandwell, our Voices of Sandwell Board comprises of a group of young people of different ages and backgrounds who work hard to represent children in Sandwell's care. They meet fortnightly to support each other, build friendships, talk about what is going well for them and what changes to their support they would like.

Our care experienced young people are invited to join the Care Leavers Forum, if they join they are given a reward and are helped with transport costs to attend the meetings. The format of these meetings is similar to those of the Voices of Sandwell Board, with similar aims representative of all care experienced young people within our care.

Members of the Voices of Sandwell Board and the Care Leavers Forum are invited to every Corporate Parenting Board meeting.

The Corporate Parenting Board utilises these existing avenues of participation to engage with children in care and care experienced young people, as well as developing new ways to get them involved based on the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.

What We Will Do

The strategy will be monitored yearly through the Corporate Parenting Co-ordinator and the Corporate Parenting Board Business meetings. A performance report will be presented to the Board bi-monthly with headline data to be monitored and acted upon promptly wherever necessary.

Appendix 1 details our action plan, setting out how we will deliver this strategy. The action plan spans one year and will be regularly monitored and updated through the Corporate Parenting Board.

Appendix 1

Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2020-2023

This action plan supports the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020-2023 and provides the actions to be completed by Sandwell Council and its key partners in their role of Corporate Parent.

This document has been prepared as part of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and the performance management of the Corporate Parenting Board. The Action Plan will be monitored regularly through the Corporate Parenting Board and will be refreshed yearly, before being added as an Appendix to the Corporate Parenting Strategy. Therefore, this is a working document.

The Action Plan has been developed in line with the Corporate Parenting Boards objectives and priorities and will regularly be presented back to the Board as well as our young people as part of our 'you said, we did...' framework.

The Action Plan encompasses the actions of the Corporate Parenting Board through 2020-2021 and includes sections relating to Health and Well-being, Child's Voice, Educational Achievement and Attainment, Safeguarding and Stability, Preparation for Adulthood and Access to Services.

Priority Group	Action	Who will be responsible?	What will success look like?	How will we measure success?
Health and Wellbeing	Launch and utilisation of the Care Leavers Passport App	Designated Nurse	The App will allow important health information in one secure place, making everything easily accessible for our Care Experienced young people. Use of the App will increase following the launch and our young people will be able to access their health information more freely and securely.	Initial feedback will be obtained from Care Experienced young people, allowing further development of the App where necessary.
	We will offer free Gym Passes for Care Experienced Young People	Public Health	We will see an increase in the current offering of free leisure passes for our Children in Care and their families. We will consider how this offering could be extended to our Care Experienced young people and Children in Care 16+.	Analysis of data from Sandwell Leisure Trust.
	We will offer free Swimming for Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People	Public Health	We will see an increase in the numbers of our children and young people visiting their local swimming pools.	Analysis of data from Sandwell Leisure Trust.
	We will offer training for staff who will regularly work with our children in care and care experienced young people.	Children's Services and Sandwell Children's Trust	We will see increased confidence from our Officers who will regularly work with our Children in Care and Care Experienced young people. We will consider our young people delivering this training, or developing the resources to be used, provoking raised awareness of our children and young people and their unique situations.	Feedback from training sessions.

	We will ensure Foster Carers and families have access to events. We will consider our current offering and the promotion of this offer.	Neighbourhoods	We will see an increase in the uptake of our current offering of our Foster Carers and their families having access to our events, Christmas at Sandwell Farm etc.	Analysis of data – amount of tickets released.
	We will consider the introduction of subsidised Air Mayhem access for Children in Care and Care Experienced young people.	Public Health	Our children and young people will benefit from subsidised entry to Air Mayhem in Sandwell.	Analysis of data from Sandwell Leisure Trust.
	We will strengthen existing links with School Nurses to ensure that the needs of our children and young people in care are considered within their daily role.	Public Health	Our school nurses will be encouraged to familiarise themselves with the children and young people in our care within their schools to ensure that their needs are prioritised.	Feedback from school nurses and from our young people.
	We will strengthen and promote our existing offers from our Youth Services to our children in care and care experienced young people and their families.	Education	We will see an increase in the uptake of the current offering and more of our young people will benefit from this offering along with their families.	Analysis of data along with feedback from our young people.
	We will subsidise access to play services for our Foster Carers and families.	Education	We will see an increase in the numbers of our Foster Carers and their families accessing our play services.	Analysis of data.
	We will discuss the possibility of the provision of bus passes for children in care and care Experienced young people.	Regeneration and Growth	We will consider the barriers to this provision and if possible establish avenues to subsidise bus passes for our young people. If possible, young people will benefit from being able to travel more freely.	Feedback to Corporate Parenting Board surrounding the possibility of this provision. Where it is possible, analysis of data to quantify the numbers of bus passes utilised.

Child's Voice	Create and manage a "You Said, We Did..." framework	Participation Team	A regularly updated framework that provides our young people with progress updates and feedback opportunities both to and from their Corporate Parents.	Feedback through various Boards and Forums.
	We will commit to the development of a Children in Care/ Care Experienced young person's Portal on the Council Website	Resources	Our young people will benefit from a Portal on Sandwell Council's website which allows them to access the relevant information that they will need access to. This Portal will be developed with our young people to ensure that it is accessible and incorporates everything they will require.	The development and launch of a SMBC Portal specifically for our children and young people, that links them with everything that they will need from the SMBC Website.
	We will commit to the development of a short film to be produced by our Care Experienced young people as a resource to raise awareness of their experiences and 'what not to say'.	Children's Services and Sandwell Children's Trust	Our young people will have the opportunity to develop a film that raises awareness of their experiences and identifies some of the key things that they think staff working with them should be aware of. This will be targeted at all agencies and at all levels and will allow our young people to directly raise awareness of 'what not to say' in the way they think best with regard to their own experiences in working with these agencies in the past.	A short film that is used as a resource in training for agencies working with young people.

	We will develop an Engagement Framework which will ensure that any change that is implemented that affects young people in care will be supported by evidence that these young people have been consulted with and have co-produced this work.	Children's Services and Sandwell Children's Trust	A framework that has been established with our young people, that is implemented in practice and allows our children and young people to be active participants in the services that are provided.	The use of the Engagement Framework after development along with feedback from our young people.
Access to Services	We will promote the use of the Health Passport App	Children's Services and Sandwell Children's Trust	We will ensure that wherever possible our young people are encouraged to utilise the Health App.	Analysis of Data.
	We will ensure that our young people are involved in the Commissioning processes wherever possible. This may be through discussions about what is required or through the evaluation of existing services.	Children's Services and Sandwell Children's Trust	We are able to identify key points in the Commissioning process where our young people have not only been involved but have been able to influence the process.	Feedback from our young people and clear links to Commissioned services.
	We will make legal and financial advice available to our care experienced young people	Children's Services and Sandwell Children's Trust	Our young people will feel better supported in terms of legal and financial issues that may arise. Advice will be available to our Care Experienced young people who require it, in the form of workshops providing general information that has been highlighted by our young people as things that are important to them.	Feedback from workshops.
Educational Achievement	We will support schools in accurately targeting Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)	Virtual School	Closing the education gap between our children in care and their peers.	Analysis of data.

and Attainment	We will utilise the new ePEP system	Virtual School	Improved quality of Personal Education Plans which will be more child-centred.	Analysis of data.
	We will offer subsidised music tuition to our children in care	Education	Our young people will be able to take up the opportunity of learning an instrument, should they wish to.	Analysis of data.
	We will continue to organise celebration events for the achievements of our children and young people	Virtual School	We will continue to deliver celebration events, continuously listening to the voice of our young people in the development of these events.	Feedback from events delivered throughout the year.
	We will consider the barriers to our children in care and Care Experienced young people accessing apprenticeships and seek to overcome these barriers to encourage apprenticeship uptake wherever possible.	Resources and Education	Consultation with key agencies surrounding the existing barriers and the potential ways to overcome these.	Feedback to Corporate Parenting Board to highlight the findings of this consultation work and to identify any next steps if developments are possible.
Safeguarding and Stability	We will continue to listen to the concerns of our young people	Sandwell Children's Trust	Our young people will have a clear platform to raise any concerns that they may have.	Analysis of data.
	We will continue to support anyone looking after our children and young people to ensure they are safe	Sandwell Children's Trust	Continued training offered for anyone caring for our children and young people. These courses will be continuously developed in line with feedback.	Feedback from training.
	We will always try to find the best to live for our children and young people. We will always try to place our young people closely to family members where this is in their best interests.	Sandwell Children's Trust	Wherever possible, our young people will be placed close to family members.	Analysis of data – out of borough figures.

	We will, where appropriate, aim to help our young people to maintain positive relationships with their friends and where appropriate their family.	Sandwell Children's Trust	Where possible and where it would be preferred, our young people will have positive maintained relationships with their family and friends.	Analysis of data.
	We will try wherever possible to maintain school stability throughout placement changes.	Sandwell Children's Trust	Our young people will, wherever possible, have fewer school moves.	Analysis of data.
	We will help you to plan for your transition into further education, employment or training and listen to your career aspirations.	Sandwell Children's Trust	Our young people will feel supported in preparing their plans for their future, whether this is regarding education, employment or training.	Analysis of data – not in education employment or training statistics. Feedback from our young people.
Preparation for Adulthood	We will offer support to our Care Experienced young people within the first 6 months of employment. This support will include workshops on understanding what to expect from work, understanding employment rights and considering sustaining employment.	Children's Services and Resources	Workshops will be developed that support our young people effectively at the beginning of employment to ensure they feel comfortable, aware of their rights and are encouraged to sustain employment. We will work with our young people to develop these workshops so that they provide relevant information.	Feedback from the workshops. Analysis of data regarding young people in sustained employment.
	We will offer Council Tax exemption for our Care Experienced young people. Our current offer is 100% exemption between the ages of 18 and 22, with 50% exemption between 23 and 25. We will look to extend this 100% exemption for all Care Experienced young people up to 25.	Resources	100% Council Tax exemption for our Care Experienced young people up to 25 years.	Exemption approved at Cabinet and Full Council.

	<p>We will give our young people the opportunity to join the Housing Register from age 16. We will place our Care Experienced young people in Priority Band 1, specifically for households requiring housing most urgently.</p>	<p>Housing</p>	<p>Our young people will be registered for housing as early as possible and when eligible for housing, they will benefit from Priority Band 1.</p>	<p>Approval through appropriate systems along with feedback from our young people.</p>
	<p>We will offer life skills support for our children in care and Care Experienced young people to help manage the transition to independent living.</p>	<p>Children's Services and Resources</p>	<p>Life skills workshops will be developed to support our young people in and before the transition to independent living. These workshops will help our young people to develop the necessary skills to live alone including, cooking and cleaning. These will be developed with our young people so that they incorporate all of the things that our young people are thinking about on the approach to their transition to independence.</p>	<p>Feedback from workshops.</p>
	<p>We will consider the current Volunteering Scheme offering with Sandwell MBC and look to raise awareness of this so that staff can offer their time to mentor our children and young people.</p>	<p>Children's Services and Resources</p>	<p>A volunteering scheme that supports SMBC employees to volunteer their time to mentor our young people. The scheme will link with the lifestyle skills that our young people tell us they would like to develop and allow staff to volunteer their time to assist with this development.</p>	<p>A volunteering scheme that is utilised. Feedback from our young people who have been mentored through the scheme.</p>