

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2017- 2020

Our promise to you.

We will:

Keep you safe

Support your education

Support your health

Help you prepare for adult life

Help your voice to be heard

Document control

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Organisation | Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council |
| Title | Children's Services – Corporate Parenting Strategy |
| Filename | Corporate Parenting Strategy |
| Owner | Group Head – Permanence & Policy Officer |
| Subject | Corporate Parenting Strategy 2017-2020 |
| Protective marking | IL0: UNCLASSIFIED |
| Review date | July 2018 |

Revision history

| Revision date | Editor | Previous Version | Description of revision |
|---------------|--------|------------------|-------------------------|
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| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Document distribution

Employees working in Children's Services

Document approvals

| Approver | Date approved |
|---|------------------|
| Vince Clarke - Service Director, Children & Families | July 2017 |
| Corporate Parenting Board | July 2017 |

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Who is a Corporate Parent?

Everyone who works with Looked After young people and care leavers have the responsibility of a corporate parent. This can be a social worker, councillor and other professionals who work in health, housing and education.

Some of these professionals meet on a regular basis to discuss the important issues involving Looked After Children (LAC) and young people and what work and support is needed to help young people succeed in lives. This is called a Corporate Parenting Board meeting and young people from the Looked After Children Board also attend to represent other looked after young people.

The Council has a Pledge for looked after children and young people, which was developed by young people themselves with different professionals, senior managers and Councillors. The pledge is a commitment to young people by the Council so they know what help and support is available and what their rights and entitlements are.

The Council's pledge is:

Our promise to you.

We will:

Keep you safe

Support your education

Support your health

Help you prepare for adult life

Help your voice to be heard

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We have a Corporate Parenting Strategy to help support children who come into care as the majority of Looked After Children need extra support in their lives because they've experienced a lot of disruption and hurt. Their experiences may make it harder for them to do as well as they could, for example in their school, health and in their relationships. The strategy looks at the areas that are needed to support the young people and over the next 3 years they will focus on 5 key areas. These are:

- Improve the life chances of Looked After Children, young people and care leavers by widening the ownership of responsibility for these children to all Councillors, officers and partners
- Improve key performance indicators for Looked After Children and young people to meet national and local targets

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| Looked After Children fulfil their educational potential | Care Leavers successfully gain employment potential | Looked After Children have good health and wellbeing potential | Looked After Children and Care Leavers are well equipped for adulthood I | Looked After Children placed outside of the Borough are not disadvantaged |

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How we will achieve the key areas in the strategy

Outcome1: Looked After Children fulfil their educational potential

- Corporate Parents will support schools to ensure Looked After Children and young people have full-time education and make good progress in school.
- Provide good support during the transition phases and especially at important times like examinations, to help them achieve. They will work with partners to create opportunities at Higher and Further Education institutions and for apprenticeships. When Looked After young people leave school, we will help support independence and the return to learning when the young person is ready.

Outcome 2: Care leavers successfully gain employment

- Corporate Parents will support Looked After Children and young people when choosing a college that's right for them and with linking potential employers with schools and colleges to support them in progressing onto a job.
- Corporate Parents will support looked after children and care leavers to identify their choice of education or training route which they feel is right for them. We will provide opportunities to link with potential employers for future employment.
- We will ensure that Looked After Children and young people's Personal Education Plans are completed and the information from this is included in their Pathway Plans to support their transition when they leave school.
- We will promote apprenticeships including opportunities within the Borough and ensure that there are named Job centre Plus Advisers for care leavers if they need to claim benefits.
- Opportunities and support will also be provided for young people with disabilities for when they leave care.

Outcome 3: Looked After Children have good health and wellbeing

- Corporate Parents will make sure Looked After Children and young people know how their health is by having appointments and make sure things are on track. Help them to go to appointments and get the support and advice they need to maintain their good health and wellbeing.
- Make sure Looked After Children and young people's carers can help them with being healthy.
- Help Looked After Children and young people to be part of decisions about their health.

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Outcome 4: Looked After Children and care leavers are well equipped for adulthood

- Corporate parents will work with young people in care or who have left care to help them get the services and support they need to become independent and responsible adults.

Outcome 5: Looked After Children placed outside of the Borough are not disadvantaged

- Corporate parents will make sure your health, education and contact is given the same priority as if you were living closer to home and will make sure that where you live is right for you. Corporate Parents will ensure that you are involved in decisions about whether staying in or outside of the Borough is best for you. t them with their choices for higher education

How we will do this:

Councillors

- They will be provided with information about issues that affect young people in care. They will make sure that they talk to Looked After Children and young people and give them a say in how the council is run. They will help secure opportunities for looked after young people and care leavers with apprenticeships.
- Provide challenge and support those services charged with delivering education achievement and progress.
- They will champion the needs of looked after children and care leavers.
- A lead Councillor from the Corporate Parenting Board will be linked with each of the work streams

Council Officers and partner agencies

- To know about the Corporate Parenting Strategy and to think about how this affects all parts of their day-to-day work.
- To help develop Council services to make sure that the Corporate Parenting Strategy is being put into practice.
- Help Looked After Children and young people to gain work experience, apprenticeships and job opportunities.

Involve Looked After Children and care leavers

- This version of the Strategy has been put together to be more reader friendly so young people can understand the strategy.
- Corporate Parents have an ongoing commitment to seek your views in the following ways: LAC Reviews, Statutory Visits, Children in Care Council, Care leavers Forum, Advocacy Service, Mind of My Own Map (MOMO) and in the day-to-day ways where you come into contact with Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officers.

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How the strategy will be used

- Through the 'The Corporate Parenting Board meeting', the board members will monitor and discuss the issues in the strategy and ensure the work is being undertaken and checked via the group's overarching action plan.
- There will also be 'theme groups' where each of the 4 outcome areas (in the table above) will have an action plan. Each group will have a lead officer who will report the progress on the action plans and making sure the work being undertaken is working and successful and meeting the targets. This will then be shared and discussed at the Corporate Parenting Board, quarterly.

Looked After Children Board

The Looked After Children's Board and Care Leaver Forum representatives will meet regularly with key professionals and senior Managers to look at the work being undertaken in the areas identified in this strategy and in partnership with the Looked After Children? Care leaver Forum Action plan. They will also randomly check with young people to gain their views and feelings about some of the services they receive through events and surveys undertaken with children in care.

Why we need a strategy

National and Local Context

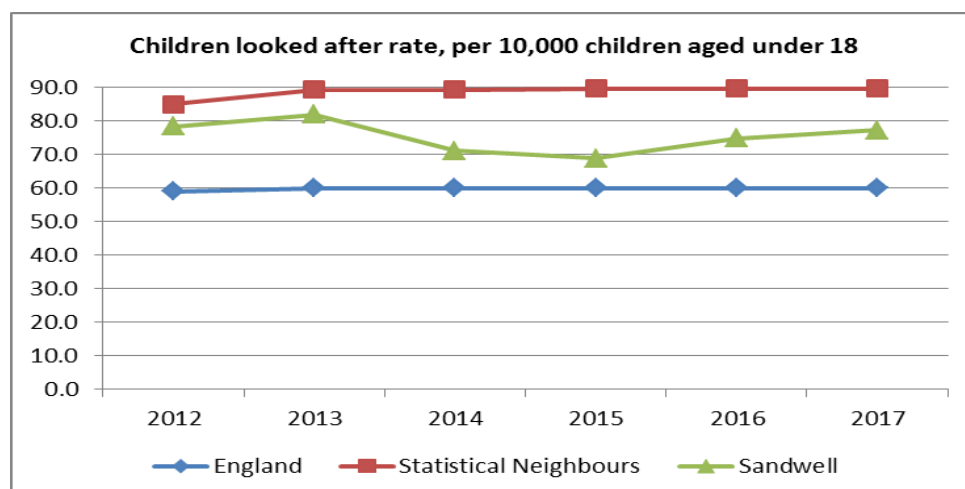
The national trend over the past 4 years has shown a static position in the number of children and young people becoming looked after. There were 60 Looked After Children in every 10,000 children aged under 18 in England in 2016. This compares to 57 per 10,000 in 2009.

Historically, Sandwell's rate of Looked After Children has been below the national average and above its statistical neighbours. As at 31 March 2017 Sandwell had a rate of 77.2 per 10,000 children.

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Figure 1: Rate of Looked After Children in Sandwell

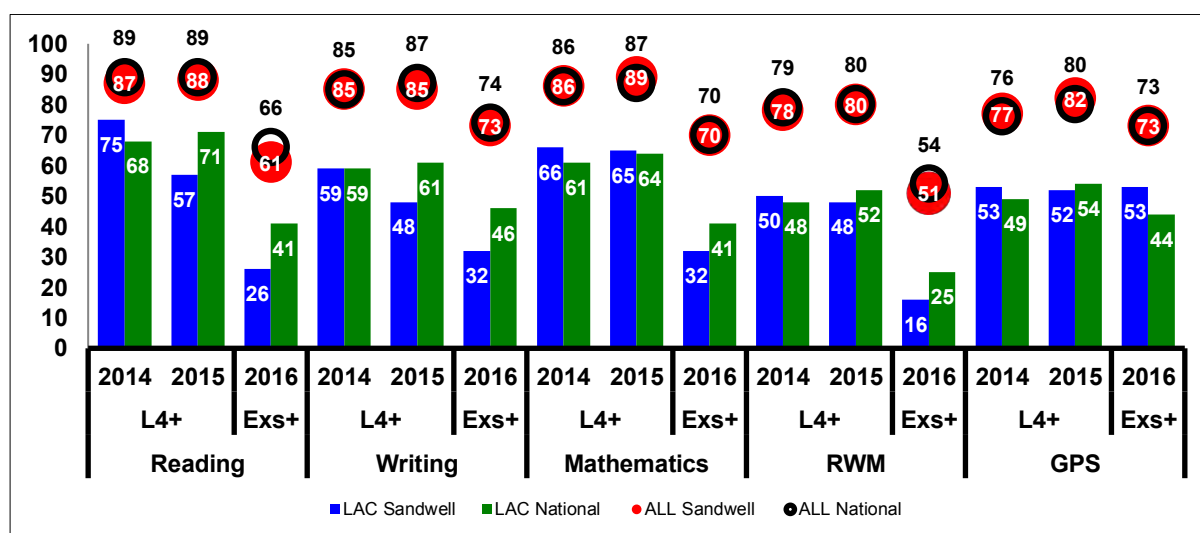
In terms of numbers, Sandwell has 608 Looked After Children as at 31 March 2017.



The majority of Looked After Children and young people start from a position of increased vulnerability and disadvantage that means additional support is needed to overcome the factors which will contribute to unacceptably high levels of poor outcomes.

This chart shows the educational attainment of Sandwell's Looked After Children against the performance of all pupils in Sandwell schools (some Looked After Children will live and be educated in other local authorities).

Figure 2. KS2- Percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard or above in Sandwell



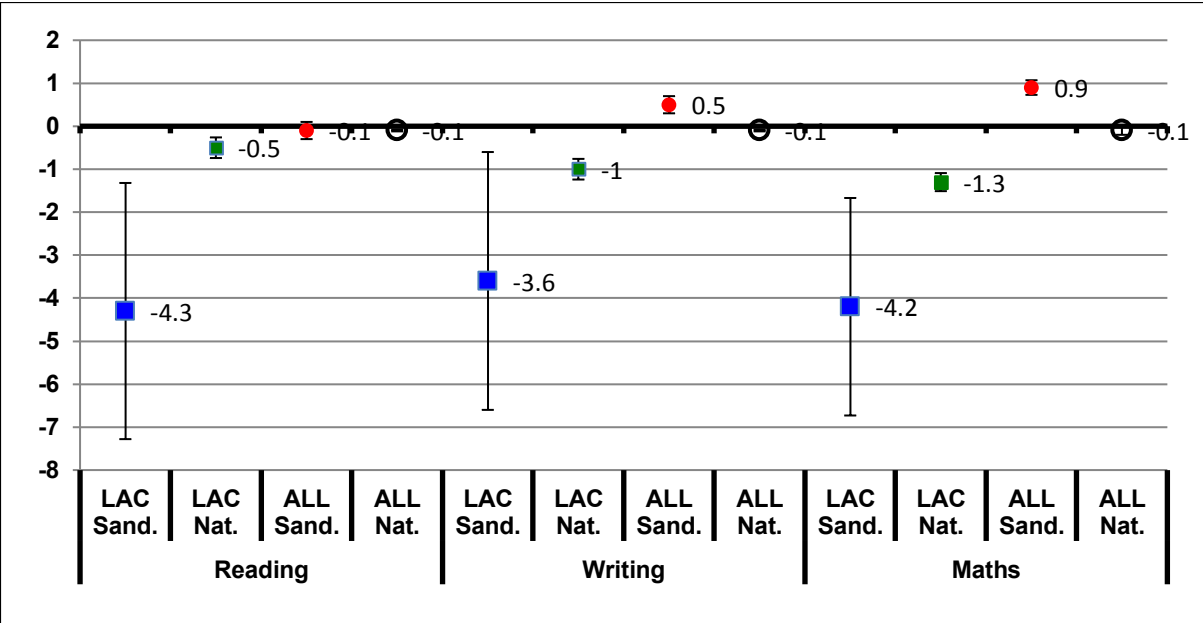
Although the 2016 National Curriculum assessment criteria is in its first year and thus results are not comparable to previous years; the percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard at the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics fell in comparison to peers in 2016. A variance of between -41% to -35% is noticeable and significant. The

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biggest drop from 2015 was in Writing (-41%) and maths (-38%). Sandwell LAC maintained consistent outcomes to previous years in GPS.

There were 19 children in this cohort, 11 children were classed as SEN with 3 (16%) having a Statement or EHCP.

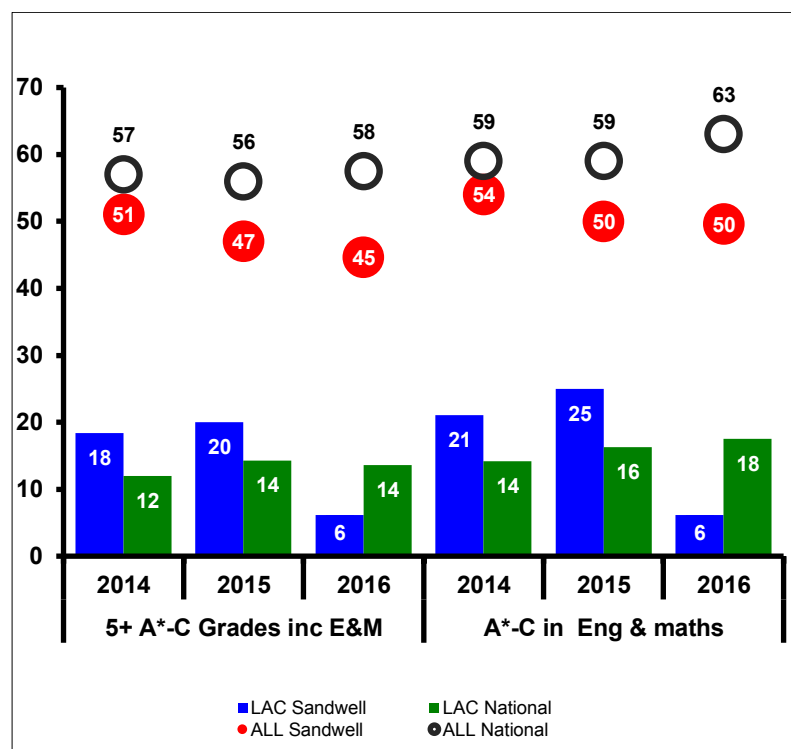
Figure 3. KS1-2 Progress – Value Added Score 2016



The graph above demonstrates that the progress of LAC pupils in Sandwell, between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, is significantly below average for all subjects as in each case the top of the error bar is below the horizontal axis. Progress in writing appears to be relatively stronger than other subjects for Sandwell LAC pupils. The progress of LAC pupils nationally is also significantly below average in all subjects. This contrasts with the overall Sandwell progress figures which show that progress is in line with national progress for reading and significantly above national progress in writing and maths.

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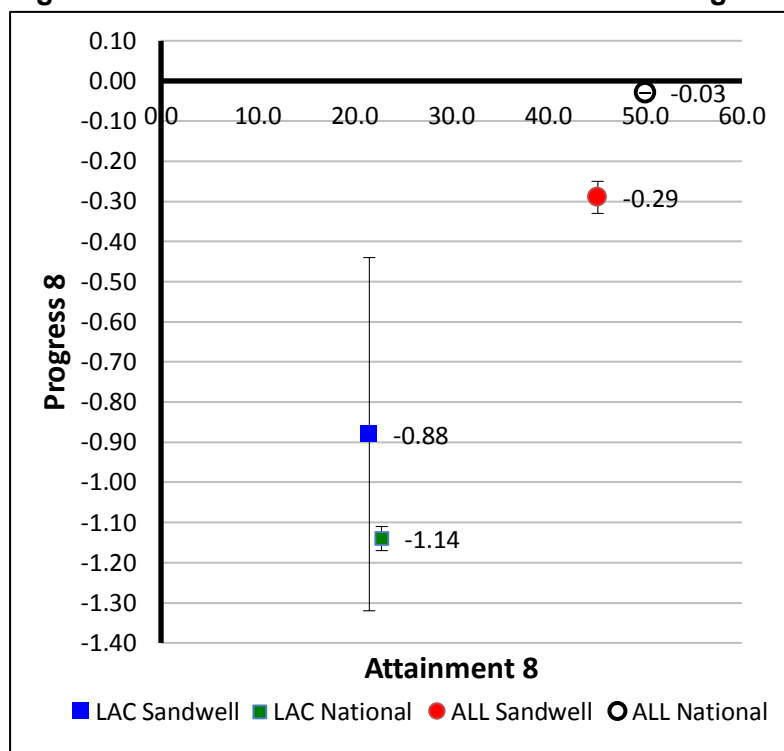
Figure 4. KS4 Attainment: Legacy measure of 5 or more A*-C including English and Maths vs. new measure of A*-C Grades in English and Maths



Validated attainment at KS4 showed a rising 3 year trend between 2013 and 2015 with outcomes for Sandwell LAC rising to 20% 5+A*CE, this was 5% above LAC national. Outcomes in 2016 indicate a sharp decline. With a -8% difference to LAC national and 44% compared to peers in Sandwell. There were 36 children in the cohort, 67% were SEND and 46% had a Statement or EHCP.

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Figure 5. KS4 new measures: Attainment 8 vs Progress 8



The graph above shows the new attainment 8 measure on the horizontal axis compared to the new progress 8 measure on the vertical axis, overall national progress for state funded schools is shown to the top right of the graph. The KS4 attainment of Sandwell LAC pupils is almost in line with that of LAC pupils nationally. Progress is significantly below average for both LAC pupils in Sandwell and LAC pupils nationally; progress appears to be faster in Sandwell however statistically it is likely to be in line with national progress as the error bars overlap. Progress for Sandwell pupils overall is also significantly below average on this measure.

It should be noted that, at 31 March 2015, 60.5% of all Looked After Children in England had some form of special educational need and 27.6% had their needs recognised in a statement or education, health and care plan (EHCP). The Despite this fact, the attainment of Looked After Children is still well below that of their peers. Poor attainment, in addition to other barriers, makes it far more difficult for them to successfully move into further education, training and work.

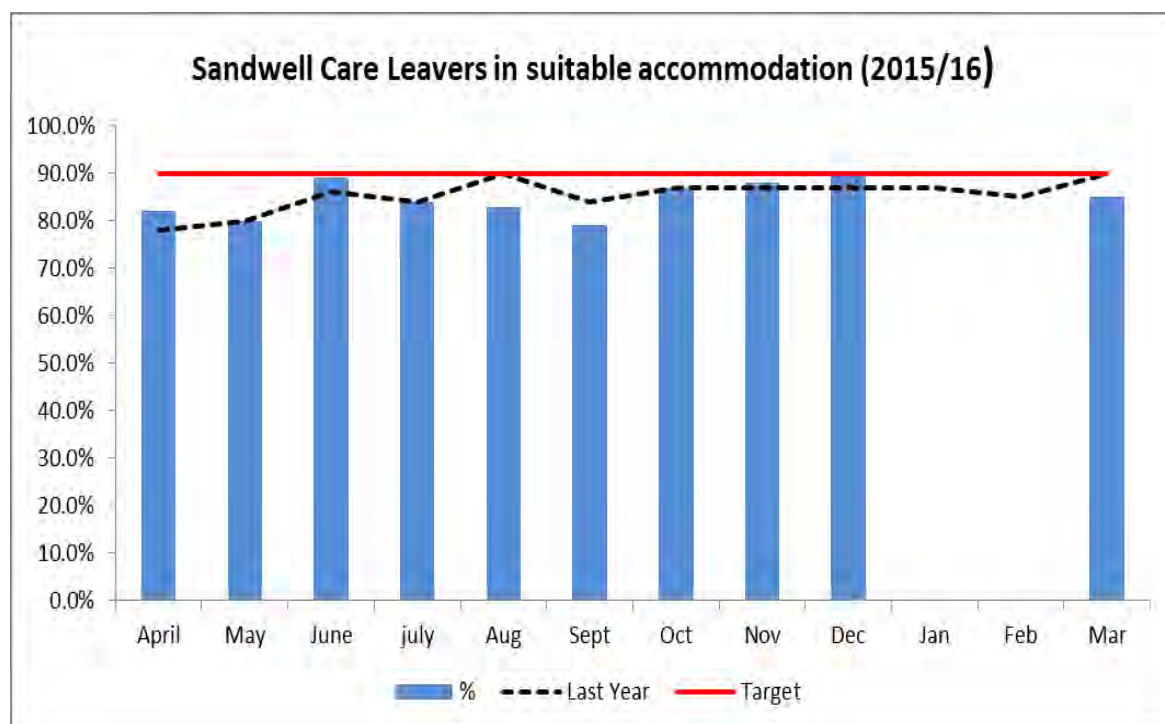
In March 2017, 58% of care leavers in Sandwell aged 19 years were in Education, Employment or Training. This has decreased during the last couple of years from 64% in 2015 however it is above the average of Sandwell's 's statistical neighbours 45.8% but is still too low.

Opportunities for care leavers to successfully gain employment can also be exacerbated by inappropriate accommodation which is either in a location where job opportunities are scarce, or does not have the support needed by care leavers to develop their life skills or sustain the tenancy. In the past year, Sandwell has been performing at 85-90% in respect of

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care leavers 19-21 years being in suitable accommodation. This is above the statistical neighbour average of (82%) and just below the England average (91%).

Figure 6: Care leavers in suitable accommodation at 19-21 years (2015/16)



*No figures were available for Jan/ Feb due to system change from ICS to LCS

Our legal duties

‘Corporate Parenting’, as a collective responsibility for local authorities, was first laid out in the Children Act 1989. Government guidance ‘If this were my child’ (DfES 2003) reiterated the leading role of Councillors in ensuring that their council acts as an effective corporate parent for every child looked after; actively supporting standards of care and seeking the high-quality outcomes that any good parent would want for their child. The mind-set should

Local authorities do not act alone in their corporate parenting role. The Children Act 1989 placed a duty on the NHS, housing and education to assist social care services to fulfil their responsibility by providing support and services. This was further compounded by the role of collaborative service agreements being emphasised in the Children Act 2004.

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Objectives and intended outcomes of the Corporate Parenting Strategy

The majority of children and young people that become looked after do so because of the inability of their parents, for a range of reasons, to offer safe, nurturing and effective care within the family home. The majority of these children and young people have suffered some form of abuse or neglect prior to coming into the care of the Local Authority and there is substantial evidence that they begin life at a disadvantage compared to their peers.

Sandwell 's principles for children and families in Sandwell:

- **Principle 1** The voice of the child is of paramount importance and must be visible and listened to through child centred practice;
- **Principle 2** Our services will reflect and respond to the diverse needs of our communities;
- **Principle 3** The quality of our delivery is central to our success and improved outcomes for children;
- **Principle 4** We will take a whole family approach to our work and engage with those who will help us to meet their needs by offering early help rather than waiting until problems escalate;
- **Principle 5** We will communicate effectively and meaningfully with our families, our staff and partner agencies.

This strategy document describes the Council's aspirations for Looked After Children and care leavers, acting collectively as a corporate parent to these children and young people to seek high quality outcomes with the mind-set of 'if this were my child' (DfES 2003). It is intended to provide a framework for all Council Officers, Councillors and partners to clarify their responsibility to contribute to corporate parenting and to fulfil their role in achieving our ambition for these children and young people.

To enable the outcomes to be achieved, all Councillors, Officers and partners will be aware of their corporate parenting responsibility and know how to fulfil it.

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The Council's pledge to Looked After Children, young people and care leavers

The Council has worked in partnership with young people, senior managers and lead Members to develop a pledge for Looked After Children, young people and care leavers. This is a commitment about how the Council will act and what these children and young people can expect in regards to their experience of services.

In regards to corporate parenting, the Council's pledge is:

Our promise to you.

We will:

Keep you safe

Support your education

Support your health

Help you prepare for adult life

Help your voice to be heard

[See appendix 1 for the Pledge]

Pledge for children in care:

The pledge for children in care has been developed by the Looked after Young People's Board (LAYPB) and replaces a previous version that had become dated and which had never been designed in a way to assess the effectiveness of the pledges. The new pledge has been redesigned and refreshed and now includes ways to monitor the actions from the individual pledges. The pledge outlines the following 10 key areas which relate to the commitments made by the local authority to looked after children.

1. Providing children in care a welcome booklet with information about being in care.
2. Ensuring children and young people will be kept safe from harm when living in care.
3. Ensuring children in care do well in Education.
4. Supporting children in care around their Health
5. Getting children in care ready for independence and adulthood.
6. Giving children in care a voice.
7. Ensuring all children in care are allocated a social worker and independent reviewing officer.
8. Ensuring children in care have a plan in place and are involved in their plan.
9. Ensuring contact is in place where possible family and friends.
10. Ensuring children in care have an opportunity to get involved with the Looked after Young People's Board.

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MOMO App

Gives children and young people the confidence & ability to express their needs.

Mind Of My Own (MOMO) is an award-winning app that helps children and young people express their views more clearly, get more involved in meetings and make better decisions with the social care team. MOMO is for children and young people aged 8 to 21. It can be downloaded on a tablet, PC, mobile phone (App Store & Google Play), gaming consoles and any other device which uses the internet. All you need is a valid email address. If children and young people haven't got one, their social worker, foster carer or reviewing officer can help.

The app will give children and young people more confidence and independence, and help them to speak up, attend meetings and raise concerns. Once they sign up to the app they can use it in their own time if there's a problem or something they want to change.

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How we will achieve the objectives of the strategy

1. The Council's Strategy for Looked After Children 2017 – 2020

Our promise to you.

We will:

Keep you safe

Support your education

Support your health

Help you prepare for adult life

Help your voice to be heard

Children and young people cared for in their own families are more likely to achieve positive outcomes. Preventing children becoming looked after, where it is safe to do so, is one of the key objectives of the Borough's LAC Strategy 2017 -2020. The Borough is committed to keeping families together by investing in preventative services and supporting parents.

If it is in the best interests of children and young people to become looked after then the Borough strives to meet their needs for permanence and stability in their placements. This will ideally be with wider family or Kinship. Otherwise, placements should be well-planned to reduce the risk of them breaking down, fostering should be long term if possible and care planning should support good transitions into independence.

2. Improving outcomes for Looked After Children

Outcome 1 Looked After Children fulfil their educational potential

Lead – Head of Virtual School

Our promise to you.

Sandwell Virtual School (LACE) has high aspirations for looked after children so that they are given every opportunity to access the very best education and achieve their potential.

We will:

Support your education

Help your voice to be heard

Work with all people associated with Looked After Children to raise their educational attainment and aspirations.

Promote high expectations and support positive participation in enrichment activities.

Be a key point of contact for the child and develop a working relationship to ensure progress.

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Provide in-class support for specific children if agreed through consultation.

Provide additional support for corporate parents/ carers where appropriate.

Develop effective protocols for out of borough children.

Promote high expectations and celebrate success at all levels.

Challenge and support early years' providers and schools to ensure that all Looked After Children and young people make appropriate progress and attainment

Ensure that all professionals, in all phases of education, have the highest aspirations for Looked After Children and work towards securing their expected attainment as well as focusing on supporting them to exceed expectations.

Work towards consistency and try, wherever possible to not change a child's school placement during Key Stage 4 (years 10 and 11)

Ensure that any transition between any placements are managed as smoothly as possible, with adequate support being provided for all parties concerned

Ensure that the admission arrangements are followed in order for children to gain a place in funded early years provision and a school which best meets their needs

Social Workers and Carers will have a better understanding of Pupil Premium and know how it is being used to support the Looked After Child/young person and seek evidence that it is having a positive impact.

Outcome 2 Care leavers successfully gain employment

Lead – Team Manager Leaving Care & Commissioning Manager Children and Young People Services

Our promise to you.

We will:

Help you prepare for adult life

Help your voice to be heard

Target: Increase in 62% of care leavers aged 17-21 years engaged in education, training or employment)

To improve the employment opportunities and success of care leavers we will:

Provide intensive specialist employment and skills advisers

Improve the offer of paid work experience to allow individuals to have an understanding of a daily routine, scale and professional skills needed in a work place.

Increase the offer of support through the educational routes to employment to allow for all individuals to achieve.

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Outcome 3 Looked After Children have good health and wellbeing

Lead – Designated Nurse Looked After Children

Target: 90% of Looked After Children to receive up to date Health Assessments and Dental check-ups.

85% of Looked After Children will have a current Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire completed in relation to their emotional wellbeing.

100% of all Care Leavers aged 18 or above will have a Health Passport (Medical History).

The Health and Wellbeing work stream will be tracking performance relating to these targets and taking any necessary action to ensure that they are achieved.

Our promise to you.

We will:

Support your health

Help your voice to be heard

The level of physical and psychological ill-health tends to be higher in Looked After Children and young people than the general population because of their often-difficult start in life.

Looked After Children tend to have more health problems compared with their peers which can result from a range of factors including missed health checks, early life experiences, poor diet, smoking and drug misuse within their household.

Outcome 4 Looked After Children and care leavers are well equipped for adulthood

Lead – Team Manager Leaving Care & Group Head LAC

Target: 92% of care leavers to be in suitable accommodation with 100% of care leavers having an up to date needs lead assessment and pathway plan. 100% all care leavers have access to the Care Leavers' Handbook, understand their rights and entitlements as they transition into adulthood.

Our promise to you.

We will:

Help you prepare for adult life

Help your voice to be heard

To ensure that you have the confidence and ability to live independently through group sessions and 1-2-1 sessions with your PA.

Allow you to progress through a independent skills training programme and live in or access a training flat to demonstrate your skills and build on them ready for 'Move On'.

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Provide you with the advice and guidance and allow you to make mistakes but learn with our support.

To develop your social and work related skills to ensure that you are able to understand differences between school, college and employment.

To ensure that you access the opportunities within education, training or employment.

Being part of the community - it is important that you are supported to maintain your friendships and helped to make new ones. You also have a right to access all those places in your community that everybody else uses, and need to have a voice so that you can make your view heard as an active citizen.

Young People will have access to the MOMO app/ Facebook page to ensure that they are given opportunity to participate and give their opinions with regards to the various consultations that are held.

Outcome 5 Sandwell Looked After Children and Young People placed outside the Borough are not disadvantaged

Lead – Group Head LAC & Placements

Target: No more than 10% of Sandwell's Looked After Children to be placed more than 20 miles outside of Borough.

Increase the number of in-house fostering placements so that 57% of our Looked After Children live in Borough by 2019.

No more than 11% of Sandwell's Looked After Children were placed outside of the Borough and more than 20 miles from their home postcode as of 31 March 2017. The total placed outside of Sandwell borders is 54% as of 31 March 2017. This compares to an England average of 37% as at 31 March 2016. The reasons for children placed outside of Borough are varied but are usually because of a lack of appropriate provision in the Borough. Sometimes children may be placed out of county to be nearer relatives and friends or for their own safety. Sandwell's figures for children placed out of borough have been fairly static for a number of months, but there is a commitment to reduce these numbers by having increased placement choice within Borough.

Children and Young People placed outside of Sandwell do not always experience the same quality of services as their peers that remain living within Sandwell.

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Consult with children placed outside Sandwell about service development through mediums such as the Participation Plan via mediums such as the MOMO app.

Ensure health assessments are timely and there is no delay in timely, quality access to health services

Support care leavers to access local services if they choose to remain in the area within which they have been placed

Ensure Looked After Children access appropriate educational provision and that their progress and achievement is monitored and ensured

Put Young People at the heart of decisions about whether it is best for them to remain living out of Borough or to move their placements back to Sandwell

Provide accommodation which is safe and appropriate

Understand how effectively the Sufficiency Statement is being delivered to offer local placements to children and young people wherever possible

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Enablers: Everyone in the Local Authority being an effective corporate parent

a) The role of Elected Members

All Elected Members, Officers and partners are aware of their corporate parenting responsibility and how to fulfil it

“Elected Councillors, you have a crucial role. Only you can carry it out. You can make sure the interests of children in care come first.” (If this were my child, DfES 2003)

Councillors are in the unique position of being able to promote opportunities for Looked After Children and care leavers through their political power and influence; through their connections to the community, schools, health services, local businesses and employers.

All Councillors should be aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities:

- Have a clear understanding and awareness of the issues for Looked After Children and care leavers in the authority area and those placed out of borough
- Champion the interests of Looked After Children and care leavers in they do
- Ask questions about outcomes for Looked After Children and care leavers
- Communicate with Looked After Children so that they can have a say in how decisions are made about the services that affect them, and so that they can influence those decisions.
- Supported by officers, promote partnership working as a pre-requisite for delivering effective service to Looked After Children and care leavers; ensure that joint planning and commissioning delivers on this agenda
- Lead on securing apprenticeships for care leavers within the Council to improve their opportunities and future prospects
- Be equally mindful and responsive in your role of corporate parent to children places out of the Borough
- Contribute to the Corporate Parenting Board and thematic working groups, where appropriate
- Ensure that the Council is adhering to its Pledge
- Some questions that Councilors should be asking themselves
- Do I understand why infants, children and young people need to be looked after and the legal and policy framework that governs this?
- Do I know about the profile, needs and achievements of all children looked after by my Council?

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- Are we providing the best care possible to our Looked After Children and care leavers? Would it be good enough for my baby, my child, my son/daughter moving into independence?
- Do I know how well my council is doing in comparison with other comparable councils and government indicators?
- Is there an action plan to address any shortcomings in services and to constantly improve outcomes for Looked After Children?
- Am I taking responsibility for promoting the welfare and opportunities for Looked After Children and care leavers in all my work in the council – and in my other capacities?

b) The role of Council Officers and partner agencies

To be most effective at improving the life chances of all Looked After Children and care leavers, the ownership of responsibility for Corporate Parenting must be extended beyond Children's Social Care. All Council departments, Officers and partner agencies have a responsibility to act together as Corporate Parents for all Looked After Children. To do this they need to be aware of this responsibility and the role that they play in ensuring that service development and delivery meets the needs of Looked After Children and care leavers.

For a whole-authority approach to corporate parenting to be effective, all Council departments and Officers will:

- Ensure employees are aware of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and committed to its objectives
- Promote the Corporate Parenting strategy across the Council, particularly to those departments that directly influence the lives of Looked After Children and care leaver
- Promote access to services for Looked After Children and their carers through both policy and practice
- Raise awareness of Looked After Children at all levels of the organisation and challenge negative and discriminatory perceptions
- Ensure Elected Members are provided with appropriate information in relation to their corporate parenting responsibilities, including service developments and key messages about what contributes to improving outcomes for Looked After Children and care leavers

In addition to these aims for all Officers and partners, some services will play an enhanced and specific role in improving outcomes for Looked After Children and care leavers. Some of these have been identified, where relevant, in outcomes 1-4. The role of the Council's key partners includes:

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Housing for care leavers

The lack and quality of supported tenancies and supported accommodation is a major concern within Sandwell. Private rentals do not tend to accept care leavers on benefits and so our young people, whilst prioritised, are competing with other vulnerable groups for accommodation such as families with young children. Accommodation that may be suitable is often not benefit sustainable. It is therefore imperative that the housing providers, are committed to working to increase the number of properties available for care leavers post 18 years old.

There is a joint protocol with Housing and it is important that housing providers work with Children's Social Care and partners to ensure there are robust and varied packages of support to enable young people to maintain their accommodation provision.

Health

Improving the health, both physical and psychological, of Looked After Children and young people is a high priority.

Specialist nurses and designated Doctors for Looked After Children and young people play an important role in ensuring that Personal Health Plans are developed with the child or young person and that these are fully implemented. Developing effective communication channels between agencies is fundamental to ensure that there are robust monitoring and referral processes.

Assessing and referring to meet the health needs of Looked After Children and young people will include their mental health and sexual health needs as well as emotional and physical health needs.

Work with partner agencies to ensure access to a wide range of services alongside a good education and training programme for Looked After Children and young people and their carers is essential in achieving positive health outcomes.

How we will involve Looked After Children and care leavers

Children and young people will receive information on Corporate Parenting appropriate to their understanding 'Show me that I Matter' Booklet. This will be disseminated to all children, including those living out of Borough, via their Social Workers and is obtainable via the Councils corporate webpage

This strategy endorses an on-going commitment to increase communication, consultation and involvement with Looked After Children and care leavers. This will be facilitated in the following ways:

We commit to communicating with all Looked After Children and care leavers and recognise that some will be more vulnerable than others. Disabled children, who, due to their unique and complex needs are often looked after in residential Out of Authority placements, far from their homes and family networks, are particularly vulnerable. The communication difficulties experienced by some of these children and young people increases this vulnerability. To

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consult with severely disabled looked after children and young people the Council will involve specialist services to ensure that people with skills in communicating with children and working directly with this vulnerable group.

Children and young people from black and ethnic minority groups also experience increased vulnerability when they become looked after. The Council will ensure that the views and specific needs of this group of children will be heard.

How we will ensure this strategy is implemented

The Corporate Parenting Board

The Corporate Parenting Board's purpose is to ensure that the whole Council and partner agencies have a joint commitment to Corporate Parenting. The aim of this is to achieve continuing improvements in the lives and outcomes for Looked After Children and young people and those who are care leavers.

The Corporate Parenting Board membership includes representatives from the Council, Health services and elected councillors. As a group, it will be responsible for overseeing that the objectives of the Corporate Parenting Strategy are realised and targets to improve outcomes are met.

Thematic Working Groups

Each of the four outcome areas in the strategy will have an associated action plan which will be delivered through a thematic working group made up of key Council Officers and partners. Each group will have a lead officer who will report progress on implementation of action plans and performance against targets to the Corporate Parenting Board on a quarterly basis.

Review of the impact of the strategy

There will be a six-month update and a full annual review of the strategy in regards to how effectively it is being implemented through the working groups and what impact it is making on the outcomes and associated targets that have been set. These reviews will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board so they can monitor and challenge performance.

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PLEDGE 1
We will provide you with information about being in care
We will give you a booklet called Show Me That I Matter when you come into our care, which gives you information that you need to know about being in care. It will give you important phone numbers of people you may need to contact.

PLEDGE 2
When you live in care we will keep you safe from harm
We will make sure you have a caring place to live and we will make sure you feel happy, safe and settled and receive the right information about where you live.

PLEDGE 3
WE WILL SUPPORT YOU IN YOUR EDUCATION
We will do everything we can to enable you to do well at school as you possibly can. Your education and individual learning is important to us. We will encourage and guide you to reach your full potential and achieve your goals and aspirations and celebrate your achievements with you.

PLEDGE 4
WE WILL SUPPORT YOU IN YOUR HEALTH
We will support you in all your health needs including physical, emotional and mental health. We will ensure you are able to participate in decisions about your health and have access to the health history that we hold for you.

PLEDGE 5
We will get you ready for being an adult
We will make sure you are aware of the Care Leaver Charter which outlines support offered to Sandwell Care Leavers. We will involve you in making decisions about getting ready to leave care and moving into adulthood and becoming independent.

PLEDGE 6
WE WILL ENSURE YOU HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD
We will listen to you and take your wishes and feelings into account in all of our work we do with you. We will make sure you have the right support at the right time from the right person. If you need to talk to someone independent, we will make an advocate available to you. You can also raise your views and report a problem around the pledge on the Mind of My Own (MOMO) app for children and young people.
Log onto www.mindofmyown.org.uk

PLEDGE 7
WE WILL ENSURE YOU HAVE A SOCIAL WORKER AND AN INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER
We will make sure that the social worker and independent reviewing officer working with you listen to you, be supportive and honest. They will work on your behalf and make sure you have access to all your rights and entitlements. They will ensure that you know how to contact them, to speak to them.

PLEDGE 8
Whilst in care we will ensure you have a plan in place
We will make sure you understand your own life story, the decisions that have been made and the plans that are in place for you. Where possible, we will involve you in the decision making.

PLEDGE 9
WE WILL KEEP YOU IN CONTACT WITH FAMILY WHERE POSSIBLE
We will help you stay in touch with people who are important to you. We will find an appropriate place for your contact. If contact can't happen we will be upfront with you and explain the reasons why.

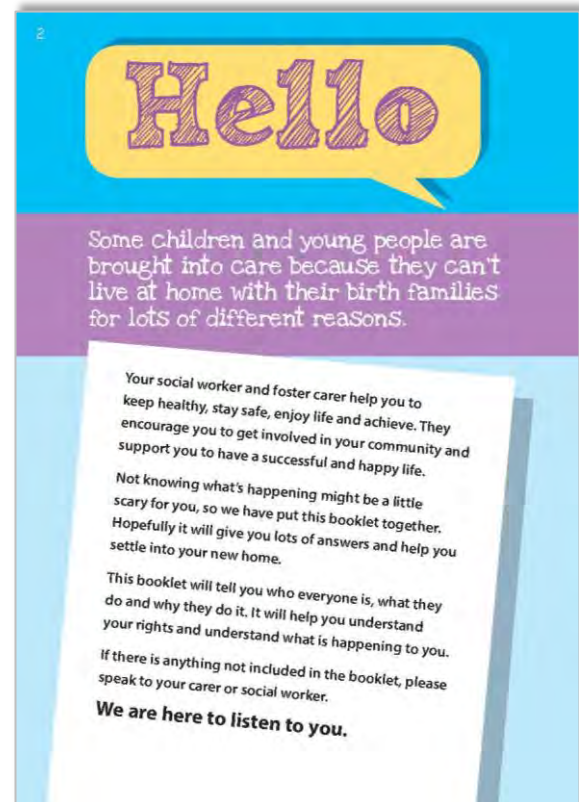
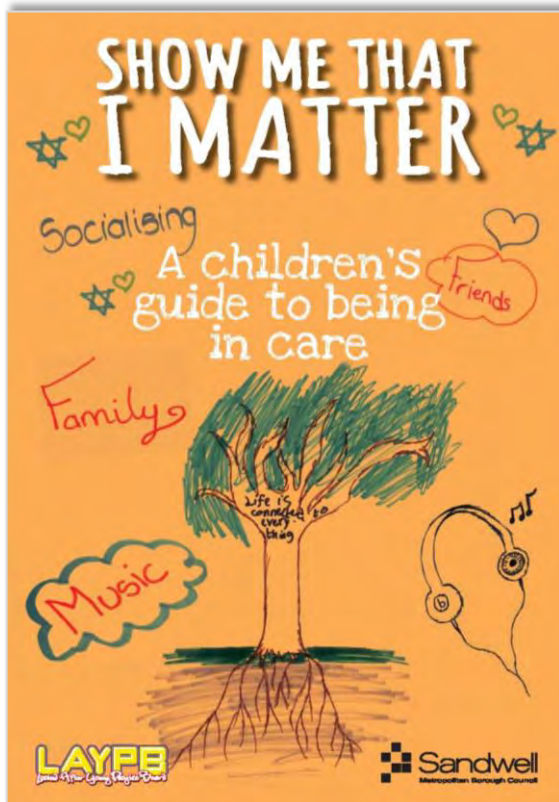
PLEDGE 10
We will give you the Opportunities to get involved
You can get involved with the Looked after Young People's Board (LAYPB) which is made up of children and young people like you. You get a chance to tell us what you think about services and how they could be improved and organise

SANDWELL'S PLEDGE TO YOU
The promises by Sandwell Council to all children in care
 Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

For further information about the pledge please contact The Participation Team on 0121 569 5922 or email lapp_board@sandwell.gov.uk

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Appendix 2



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All about me

Passport

Name:
 Nickname:
 Date of birth:
 Age:

Ethnicity/religion:
 First language:
 School/nursery/college:
 Likes:
 Dislikes:
 Favourite hobbies:
 Favourite TV programmes:

Doctor's name, address and phone number:
 Independent reviewing officer's name:

Name of foster carers:
 Address:
 Social worker's name:

Date I came into care:
 Mother:
 Father:
 Brothers/sisters:

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HARRY AND ELLIE'S STORY...

HI I'M HARRY, I'M 13 YEARS OLD AND LIVE WITH MY MOM AND MY SISTER ELLIE, WHO IS 10.

I'M ELLIE.

MY SOCIAL WORKER CAME TO VISIT AND SAW THAT MY MOM WAS STRUGGLING.

I CAN'T COPE AND I'M STRUGGLING TO LOOK AFTER MY CHILDREN. I HAVE NO SUPPORT FROM FAMILY OR FRIENDS.

HARRY AND ELLIE WILL BE PLACED IN A NEW HOME WITH A FOSTER FAMILY. A CARE PLAN WILL BE DECIDED BETWEEN HARRY, ELLIE, THEIR MOM AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES.

I WILL MAKE REGULAR VISITS TO HARRY AND ELLIE EVERY 6 WEEKS AND I WILL MAKE SURE THEY RECEIVE SUPPORT WITH HEALTH, EDUCATION AND ANY OTHER HELP THEY NEED.

WE LIKE OUR FOSTER FAMILY AND OUR NEW HOME.

THEY LOOK AFTER HARRY AND ME LIKE WE ARE PART OF THEIR OWN FAMILY.

MY FOSTER CARERS HELP ME WITH MY SCHOOL WORK, AND WE DO DIFFERENT THINGS TOGETHER.

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LAYPB Looked After Young People's Board

Are you a young person in the care of Sandwell Council?

Are you aged 11 to 19 and do you want to make a difference?

Got something to say?

Fed up of not being listened to?

GET INVOLVED!

For more information, please contact the participation team on 0121 569 5922 or go to www.sandwell.gov.uk/laypb

KEY FACTS

- WE listen to what young people have to say about being in the care of Sandwell Council.
- WE tell people who make decisions at Sandwell Council about what young people tell us works or doesn't work in our lives.
- WE involve young people in meetings, groups and meetings so they can tell us how we can make services better.
- WE involve young people in lots of exciting projects.
- WE give young people the chance to have their voice heard by people who run services.
- WE give young people the opportunity to influence and change how services are run for the better.
- WE raise our concerns to the corporate parenting board at Sandwell Council.
- WE also have a lot of fun too!

GET INVOLVED IN YOUR LOOKED AFTER YOUNG PEOPLE'S BOARD TODAY!

MOMO MIND OF MY OWN

The MOMO App

Mind Of My Own (MOMO) is an award-winning app that helps you express your views more clearly, get more involved in meetings and make better decisions with the social care team. MOMO is for children and young people aged 8 to 21. You can download it on a tablet, PC, mobile phone (App Store & Google Play), gaming consoles and any other device which uses the Internet.

All you need is a valid email address. If you haven't got one, your social worker, foster carer or reviewing officer can help you.

The app will give you more confidence and independence, and help you to speak up, attend meetings and raise concerns. Once you sign up to the app you can use it in your own time if there's a problem or something you want to change.

For more information about the MOMO app, get in touch with the participation team on 0121 569 5922.

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Where will I be living?

Foster placement

Foster carers are people who have been approved by Sandwell Council's fostering panel after taking part in assessments and training. Foster carers work with children's services to provide a family for children and young people who cannot live with their birth families. Foster carers should make you feel a part of their family and give you the chance to be happy and achieve in a safe, secure, loving and caring home.

Your carer should:

- provide daily care and guidance;
- help you with your education and medical needs;
- go with you to all your meetings and act as your advocate;
- work towards your care plan; and
- support contact with your family and friends where this is appropriate.

Sometimes it may not be possible to match you with a foster carer of the same faith or culture. If this is the case, your foster carer and social worker should try and make sure you can continue with your religious beliefs and other family traditions.

Family and friends carers

Family and friends carers are approved by Sandwell Council's fostering panel in the same way as a foster carer. They provide the same care as a foster carer – the only difference is it's likely to be a relative or a family friend who is taking care of you.

Living in a residential home

Some children and young people might have to live in a residential home. This is when you live with other young people. You may need extra support and you will have a residential support worker who will be able to help you with day-to-day living. This could also include 24-hour support.

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Who will support me?

Your Social worker

Your social worker is an employee of Sandwell Council and works in children's services. Their role is to keep you safe, happy and healthy and help you to do well in school. Your social worker will visit and speak to you during their visit. They will listen to you and work with you towards your care plan.

Your social worker will attend your looked after child (LAC) reviews, personal education plan (PEP) meetings, health checks and any other meeting about you that your foster carer may need support with.

Your social worker should listen to your wishes and feelings, and see how these can be best met. If you are able to have contact with family and friends, your social worker should support this. They will also do any assessments and arrange help that you may need.

Your social worker is the person you should be able to talk to about anything and not feel scared or intimidated by them. Don't forget, they are there to help you.

Supervising social worker (SSW)

Your foster carer will also have a supervising social worker (SSW) who will visit to make sure all is going well in your placement. They will support your carer in keeping you safe and happy. They will attend foster carer reviews and, just before the review, they will ask you to fill in some paperwork, which will be shared at the review.

The SSW will carry out training with your carers to help them care for you and any other child they are caring for. They will also speak to you to make sure all is going well with the placement during their visit.

Independent reviewing officer (IRO)/Looked after child (LAC) review

An IRO is an independent person who will oversee your care while you are looked after by Sandwell Council's services. LAC review meetings are where all people involved in your care will meet up to look at how your needs have been met and if there is anything else they can do to make things better for you.

You will have a LAC review every six months. You may be asked if you would like to attend the review, as this meeting will discuss decisions about your life. You can even chair your meetings if you wish to do so.

The IRO will look to see if your needs are being met in your foster placement. They look at how you are doing in education, how your contact is going and whether you are healthy.

The IRO will look at your care plan and will make sure everyone is working towards it.

The IRO will visit you and get your views on how things are going before the LAC review is held. All people involved in your care will be asked to attend the review meeting.

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Health

I am here to make sure you stay healthy

As a looked after child you will have a health check when you first enter care and will continue to receive one every 12 months. These are carried out by a doctor and a health nurse for looked after children. Your carer should also take you for an eye test every year and for dental checks every six months. They should take you for any follow up treatment that you need. Your carer should keep a record with dates of checks and give this to your SW and social worker.

Education

I am here to make sure you learn at school or college

Wherever we can, we will try to keep you at the same school. We don't want you to have too many changes all at the same time. But if this isn't best for you, or your placement is outside Sandwell, you may have to move school. At school, you will have a designated teacher who is there to help with your education and will attend your personal education plan (PEP) meeting. You will have a PEP meeting every six months. This is to look at how you are doing and see if any other support needs to be put in place. You have the right to attend these meetings with your social worker and foster carer. In Sandwell, we also have a Virtual School for children in care. This works closely with schools to make sure you have a good education.

What is a care plan?

A care plan is a document that explains what you need and how you should be cared for. Your social worker is responsible for writing the care plan and this should be updated just before each of your looked after child (LAC) reviews takes place.

Pathway plan

Some children will continue to receive support when they leave care. They will need what's called a pathway plan until they're 21. This plan includes your wishes and dreams for the future, like where you want to live and whether you want to continue in education or go to work. Your views and wishes must be heard and taken into account before any decisions are made about your future. Please speak to your social worker if you want more information about your pathway plan.

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Contact with family and friends

Most children and young people who come into care want contact with their birth family and friends.

In a lot of cases we do feel that you should be able to see birth relatives, but sometimes this may not be the right thing for you. If this is the case, your social worker will explain to you why this is.

If you would like contact with your birth family and we feel it's right for you, your social worker and foster carer will support you with this. Your visit may be supervised by your social worker or a worker from the contact centre.

All details about your contact will be part of your care plan. This can be reviewed at any time to make sure you are happy with how things are going.



Our PROMISE to YOU (Pledge)

We will:

- Keep you safe ✓
- Support you with education ✓
- Support your health ✓
- Help you prepare for adult life ✓
- Help your voice to be heard ✓

For a copy of your pledge...
Please contact the participation team by calling 0121 569 5922
or email layp_board@sandwell.gov.uk or abduf_kahar@sandwell.gov.uk

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If you are not happy in your placement

If you are having issues, or you are not happy with your foster carer or placement, first of all try to speak with your foster carer.

If you still feel things have not changed or got better, you should then speak to your social worker. They can set up a joint meeting with your foster carer and the support social worker (SSW) to talk things through and look for a solution.

If it is felt things will not get better in your placement, then your social worker will speak with their manager to look at other ways to put things right. This could even mean you having a change of foster placement.

If you are unhappy and want to make a complaint:
Call 0121 569 7867 or use the MOMO app

If you are unhappy with staff from Sandwell children's services

If you feel you are not listened to, or that things have not been done by your social worker or any other staff in children's services, first of all try to speak to them.

If you feel unable to do so, then contact the office and ask to speak to their manager. Tell them what the problem is and ask them if it can be sorted out. You could ask for a joint visit and to speak to an advocate who will support you to get your views heard, so things can get sorted.

If you are unhappy and want to make a complaint:
Call 0121 569 7867 or use the MOMO app

What is an advocate?

An advocate is a person who can help you say if you don't like something or if you don't agree with a decision that affects your life.

When you are looked after or in the care of children's services, remember you have the right to:

- Have a say in decisions that affect your life
- Be listened to and taken seriously
- Use an advocate to help look after your rights and to help you speak up and attend meetings
- Not be hurt or abused
- Be treated fairly, whatever your race, religion, sexuality, gender, language or disability
- Have your health looked after
- Get the most out of your school or college

Advocates are independent which means they don't work for the council or children's services. Advocates will not tell anyone what you say to them without your agreement, unless there is something that might cause harm to you or someone else. Call the Black Country Advocacy Service on 01902 877563.

Useful numbers



We at Sandwell children's services want you to have a good placement and be treated as part of the family.

We will aim to support you with your day-to-day living and want you to feel able to talk openly to your social worker and others who work with you.

We want you to have the best life and for your future to be a happy and successful one.

Looked After Children's Team:
0121 569 5922

Black Country Advocacy Service:
01902 877563

Participation Team:
0121 569 5922
layp_board@sandwell.gov.uk

Complaints & queries:
0800 352 3005

Independent Reviewing Officer:
0121 569 4770

Leaving Care Team:
0121 569 2201

LACE Virtual Schools:
0121 569 7552

Emergency Duty Services (out of hours):
0121 569 2355

Sandy Wells over 13s only

LAYPB
Looked After Young People Board

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