

Our Children, Our Future

Leicestershire's commitment to inspire, support and enable children in care and care leavers to be ambitious and successful

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Leicestershire Procedure for Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019-2022

Applies to-

All employees of Leicestershire County Council and Elected Members.

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Foreword

In Leicestershire we want to ensure that all children are given opportunities to be happy, healthy and to achieve their best outcomes. We want children and young people to enjoy positive experiences in safe and supportive families, well connected to their local communities and, when necessary, are well supported by a wide range of targeted support services to build strong and resilient family relationships.

When children cannot safely live in their family or wider network our priority is to provide safe secure and caring homes where children are given all the opportunities they need to inspire them to have high aspirations and to support their success through their childhood and into adulthood. We will do this by valuing children for who they are and who they want to be.

In Leicestershire we are committed to and are ambitious for our children in care and care leavers. We are determined to ensure that we carry out our duty and responsibilities as Corporate Parents with genuine passion, enthusiasm and care.

We understand that all our children have individual needs and goals therefore our care planning and planned support offered to our children reflects this.

We carefully monitor and support education and learning for our children to enable progress and success and we strive to ensure that our children are healthy both physically and emotionally.

We know that we will be successful corporate parents if we really listen to our children and ensure that their views and opinions have meaning in all areas of our decision making; “you said - we did.” The impact of this is seen in the enthusiasm, leadership and effectiveness of our children and their participation in our Children in Care Council, Supporting Young People After Care (SYPAC), our Corporate Parenting Board and many more participation events.

This Corporate Parenting Strategy provides the foundation and value base for how we will deliver high quality services to our children in care and care leavers. It highlights where we are, where we want to be and how we intend to develop further to achieve our aspirations as corporate parents to enable our children to meet their own ambitions and be successful in what they do now and in the future.



John Moore



Tom Ould

Lead Member for
Children and Family
Services

Director of Children
and Family Services

Leicestershire

OUR VISION

Leicestershire is the best place for all children, young people and their families

This means that we will describe the outcomes we want to achieve for children, young people and their families and identify measures that can tell us how well we are achieving against them. We will aim to be the best performing local authority in the country against these measures, and where we are not yet there we will set stretching targets for annual improvement.

OUR MISSION

Children and young people in Leicestershire are safe and living in families where they can achieve their potential and have their health, wellbeing and life chances improved within thriving communities.

Leicestershire County Council is currently¹ the corporate parent to 613 children and young people in care and 229 care leavers. As a corporate parent the County Council has a collective responsibility to be a good parent to the children and young people in its care, so that they grow up happy, achieve well and have successful lives. This means the Council is expected to do what any responsible parent would do for their children.

Responsible parents care about their children's safety and their health, their education and their leisure interests, their friendships and their futures. They know about their children's development and what their talents and achievements are, they understand their problems. They support their child's education, listen and talk to their children so they understand their needs, and hear and respond to their worries.

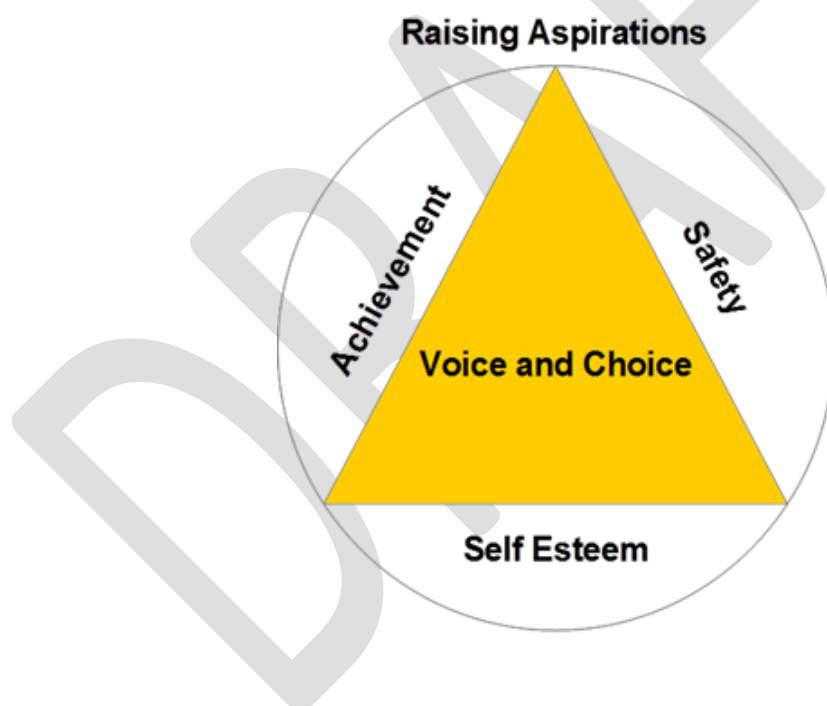
¹ As at August 2019

Leicestershire has a strong corporate parenting ethos which recognises that the care we provide for our children is not just about keeping them safe, but also to promote recovery, resilience and well-being. To achieve this, we recognise the importance of stability for our children and our ambition to secure emotional attachment, physical stability and long-term commitment for our children.

Leicestershire County Council also recognises the importance of education in transforming life chances for children and young people and our aim is that all children in care can receive prompt access to appropriate, stable education placements and positive educational experiences.

The Leicestershire Virtual School actively promotes the education of our children in care, working with schools, settings and wider services within and beyond Leicestershire to secure prompt access to quality education, appropriate to their identified needs and minimise disruption to stable provision.

The importance of corporate parenting responsibility to help drive this ambition is outlined in the following diagram:



Who are our 'Children in Care and Care Leavers?'

A child (under 18 years) is legally 'looked after' by a local authority if he or she:

"is provided with accommodation under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 from the local authority for a continuous period of more than 24 hours; is subject to a care order; or is subject to a placement order. This also includes disabled children who are provided with accommodation under Section 20. Looked after children in care

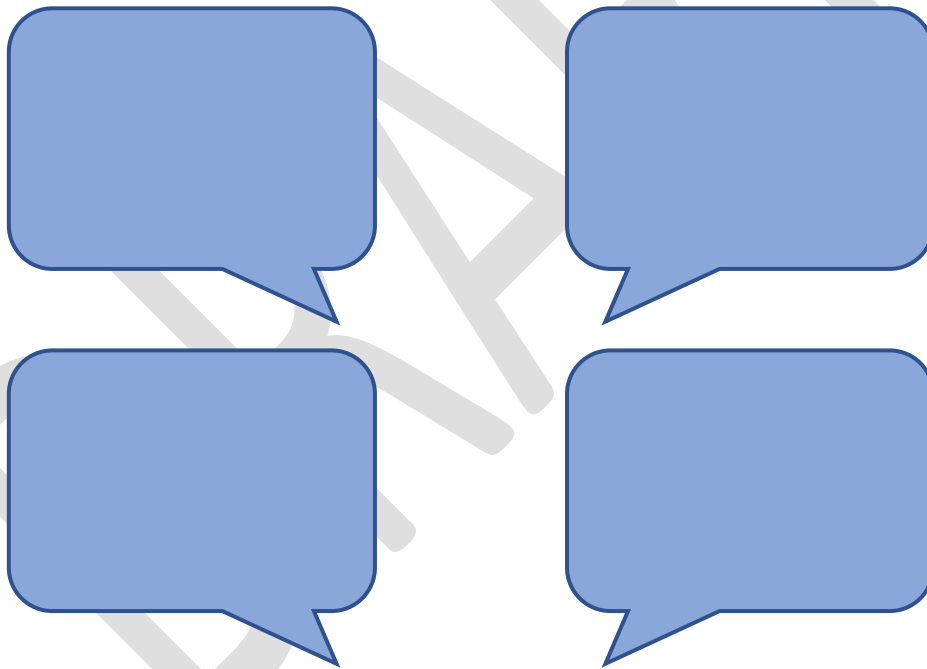
can be placed with foster carers, in residential homes, with parents or other relatives (under certain circumstances)”

Definition of a care leaver:

“A care leaver is broadly defined as a person aged between 16 and 25, who has been looked after by a local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 is either currently in care or has left care and has been looked after for a period of time after their 16th birthday”

What do our children say?

We understand the importance and value of the views of our looked after children and care leavers and together we have developed ‘Our Promise’ which informs this strategy. (Will be gathered as part of the consultation)



Our Promise



Our Promise sets out our commitment to ensure that Leicestershire County Council and its partners provide the best support, guidance and care to our Children in Care and Care Leavers. It demonstrates that we value them for their individuality, provide stability and offer aspirational life chances in the same way any good parent provides for their children.

In the same way that a family shares responsibility for bringing up their children with their extended family members, the corporate parenting responsibility must be shared by everyone involved in supporting children in care. This includes health bodies, education services such as schools and colleges, the police, youth and youth justice organisations, and the private and third sectors.

Leicestershire County Council, elected members and key partner agencies have all signed up to Our Promise. Collectively we want to enable all our young people to make positive life choices and achieve their goals and beyond. Our Promise makes a commitment directly to young people and their families in 7 Key Areas:

- We will support you
- Respect and Honour your identity
- We will listen to you
- We will believe in you
- We will find you a place you can call home
- We will inform you
- We will be a lifelong champion

Corporate Parenting Principles – Children and Social Work Act 2017

When a child becomes looked after in Leicestershire as corporate parents we are committed to provide stability, security and aspirational care for our children and to challenge ourselves 'would this be good enough for my child?'. The 7 principles

describe the behaviours and attitudes expected of councils when they are acting as any good parent would do by supporting, encouraging and guiding their children to lead healthy, rounded and fulfilled lives.

- To act in the best interest, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, 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.
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Who is involved and responsible?

A strong corporate parenting ethos means that everyone from the Chief Executive to front line staff, as well as elected council members, are concerned about our children and care leavers as if they were their own. In Leicestershire, Corporate Parenting is promoted as the responsibility of all.

The actions, ambitions and belief in our children from the Director of Children and Family Services and the Lead Member for Children and Family Services sets the tone for us all to be an effective corporate parent.

Councillors as Corporate Parents

In 1998, the Secretary of State wrote to councillors reminding them that they are ultimately accountable for the quality of care provided by their local authority and set out their specific responsibility to lead this work and monitor its effectiveness.

This position has been supported through published guides for councillors by the Department for Education in 2003 and 2013, highlighting that all elected members should be prepared and ready to champion the interests of looked after children and young people in their community.

Elected members are in the unique position to promote opportunities for looked after children and care leavers through their political power and influence, through their connections in the community, schools, health services, local businesses and employers. If these links can be built upon then 'life choices' and outcomes for children and young people can be greatly improved. Elected members are supported, by officers to engage with children in care and care leavers to support their understanding and gain their voice.

Within Leicestershire we define how we expect elected members to fulfil their responsibilities as a 'corporate parent' in 7 principles:

- by having an understanding of the profile and needs of the children in the care of the local authority
- by being aware of the impact on looked-after children of all council decisions
- by considering whether this would be good enough for your own child
- by ensuring that the council has a focus on improving outcomes for looked-after children.
- by acting as an advocate for looked-after children in your local community.
- by supporting the Member Champions in their role
- by being aware of the work and aims of the Corporate Parenting Board

In 2019, three Member Champions will be appointed relating to Education, Training and Work, Accommodation and Housing and Health. These champion roles will lead a working group on one of the specified areas to develop our offer for children in care and care leavers and unpick issues and barriers as they arise.

The lead member for children's services (LMCS) and the director of children's services (DCS) are required by law to hold direct local accountability for the effectiveness, availability and value for money of the local authorities children's services. The LMCS holds political accountability for all local authority children's services, including education and social care and the DCS carries the professional accountability.

Officers within Children and Family Services

Officers in Children and Family Services have additional responsibilities to support and provide services for looked after children and young people, and care leavers. They will ensure that their care planning and transition planning is effective, meaningful and influenced by their voice and choice.

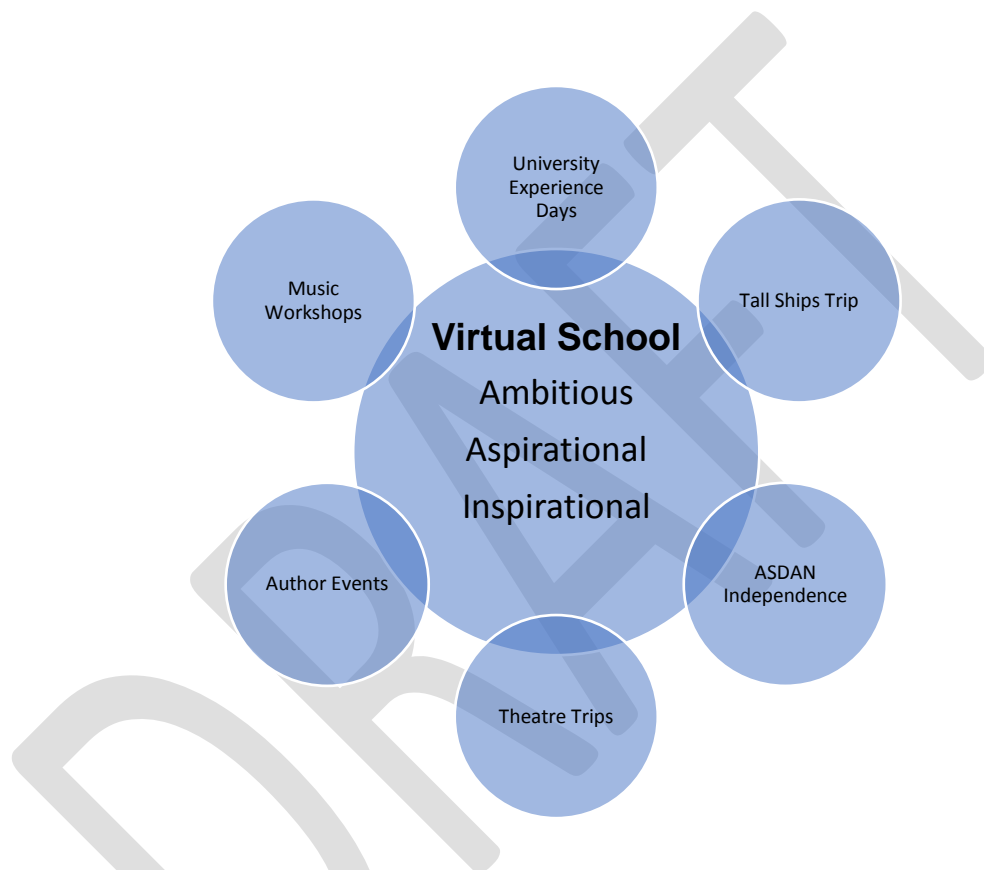
The Assistant Director for Social Care has direct responsibility for corporate parenting, as do the wide range of roles that work directly with our children, such as: Independent Reviewing officers, Social Workers, Participation Workers, Children's Rights officers, youth offending workers, personal advisors and the Virtual School.

Virtual School

In Leicestershire our Virtual School is committed to creating and supporting high aspirations for our children in care and those leaving care. The dedication and support offered is in place to help our children achieve their best. Our children attend a range of schools both geographically and in terms of specialism, however the virtual school is central to ensuring that all our children in care and care leavers receive a high standard of education to enable them to successfully achieve good outcomes and successful futures.

Leicestershire Virtual School are successful by working in partnership with schools and social workers towards shared visions and goals. The Virtual School support this through monitoring, supporting and challenging where necessary through the review of the Personal Education Plans (PEP) and monitoring the use of the Pupil Premium Plus. The voice of our children is fundamental to effective planning and the Virtual School is committed to ensuring that the voice of our children is not only sought but valued and incorporated into any planning.

Additionally, the Virtual School lead a broad spectrum of engagement activities and learning opportunities including but not exhaustive of the following:

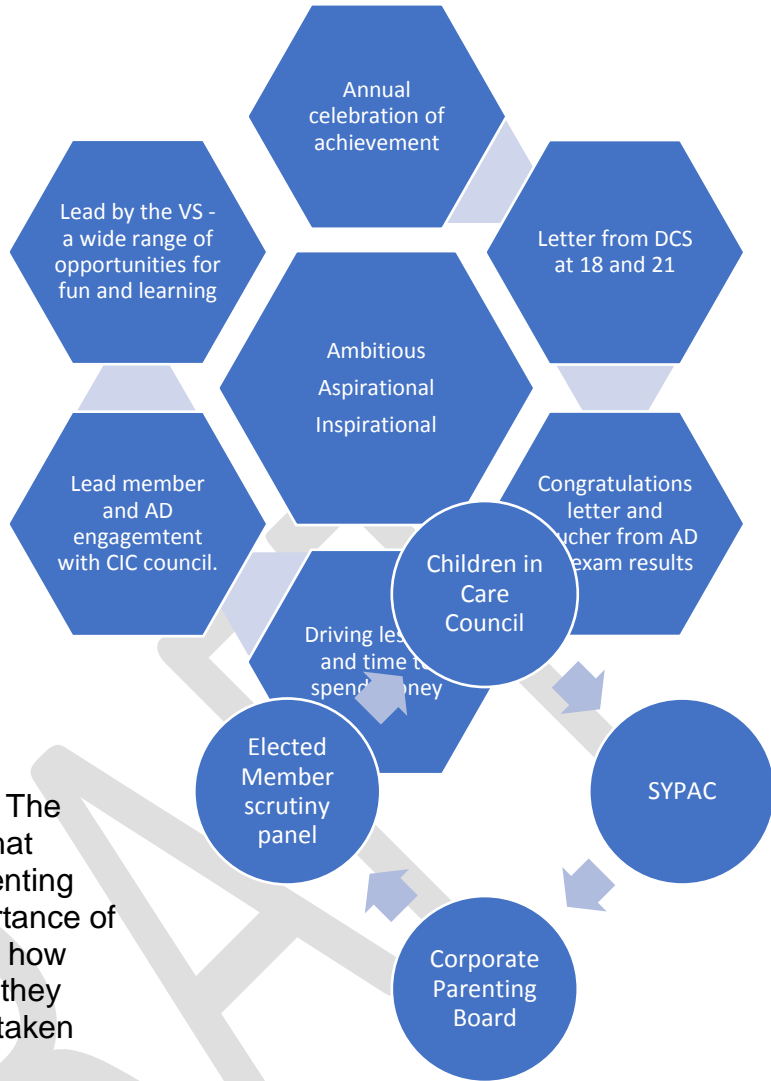


What else do we do to show that we care?

We are dedicated and committed to ensuring that our children in care and care leavers feel very much thought of and cared for by Leicestershire. This is achieved not only by ensuring that the 7 corporate parenting principles are fully embedded, but also by providing a broader offer of engagement and contact that we consider essential to being good Corporate Parents.

Governance Arrangements for Corporate Parenting

Strong corporate parenting means strong leadership, challenge and accountability at every level. The governance arrangements that underpin our Corporate Parenting approach focus on the importance of the voice of our children and how they experience the support they receive, feel listened to and taken seriously. Our governance arrangements enable challenge and reflection on how effectively we are applying the corporate parenting principles and ensuring the high level of care that we strive to provide.



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 is well attended by partner agencies enabling the multi-agency ownership of the corporate parenting principles to be strong. The meeting is co-chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Family Services one of our care experienced young people. There is strong representation from our children in care council and Supporting Young People After Care (SYPAC) groups, which enables our children to have the platform to challenge, influence and celebrate. The

terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Board are contained in Appendix one of this strategy.

Children in Care Council and SYPAC

Leicestershire's Children in Care Council is a group of young people in care aged between 7-18 who represent children and young people in care in Leicestershire. There are two groups – a younger group aged 7-13 and an older group 14+. Together they act as the voice of their peers and meet on a monthly basis to discuss and consider the issues faced by children in care; things that are important to them; look at ways of making a difference for children in care and how they can influence this locally in Leicestershire as well as nationally through such forums as the All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

Our care leavers are vital in shaping the services going forward and improve our offer to all our children.

SYPAC is the forum for our care leavers 18 -25 years old and offers a monthly meeting to socialise, discuss and influence decisions regarding children in care and care leavers and to highlight their views and opinions. There is also attendance from virtual school, children's rights and welfare rights to support and enhance independence skills of our care leavers.

Both our children in care council and SYPAC are regularly involved in decision making at various levels and bring robust challenge to hold decision makers to account both internally, regionally and nationally. Both groups have had an effective impact on the support that our children receive and decisions within Leicestershire. Some examples of these are outlined below:

Children in Care Council and SYPAC activities	Impact
Consulted and influenced the development of 'Our Promise'	Ensuring the vision of Leicestershire is led by the needs of our children.
Supported and consulted on the ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) independence work book and how this will be implemented to support our children	Ensuring that children in care are supported with developing their independence skills to enable better transition to adulthood and independence.
Key role in developing a leaflet to give their views for Review of Arrangements	Enabling the voice of our children being represented and listened to in care planning meetings if they don't feel able to attend or represent their view.
Creation of a leaflet for children to understand the process of a Child Protection Conference.	Support children in understanding the roles and responsibilities of the child protection conference. Enable them to be empowered and involved.
Involvement with fostering training	Improvement in understanding of Prospective Foster Carers of the impact

	of being in care. Their role in supporting this and an improved experience for our children.
Creation of a 'Family Time Agreement' to support expectations for both children and their families about the time that they will spend with each other.	Our children can be clear about the expectations at the beginning and there is consistency with workers in exploring different options for family time.
Young person's interview panel for all relevant posts within Children and Family Services	Most recently direct influence on the appointment of our Director, Assistant Director and Head of Service for Field Social Work
Comprehensive Mapping program with our care leavers in relation to the local offer to care leavers	True representation of voice within the consultation and development of the local offer for care leaver. Ensuring that this is appropriate and effective.

What success will look like

As corporate parents we need to know what success will look like to ensure that we are challenging ourselves to continually strive for the best for our children. The table below sets out how we will measure our success in the delivery of outcomes for our looked after children and care leavers.

Outcome 1 Improved Physical Health	Outcome 2 Improved Mental Health	Outcome 3 Placement stability and safe homes	Outcome 4 Attainment	Outcome 5 Care leavers
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<i>Children will:</i>	<i>Children will:</i>	<i>We will:</i>	<i>Children will:</i>	<i>We will:</i>
Have an up to date health assessment	Be supported through evidence-based interventions to maximise their emotional and mental well being	Where appropriate seek to place children and young people within 20 miles of their home address	Be supported to achieve their full potential	Support care leavers to find safe, stable and suitable places to live, making sure they are as well prepared as they can be
Be registered with a GP	Have improved Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire results.	Where appropriate seek to place children and young people within long term, in house provision	Have a Personal education plan which will be aspirational and ambitious	Will give opportunities to keep in touch with them until they are 25 and have high aspirations for them
Be registered with a dentist	Be referred to specialise mental health services and receive treatment in a timely manner where appropriate	Ensure children have improved placement stability	Have their progress at school monitored and every child will receive tailored support from a specialist advisor	Support care leavers to remain with their long-term foster families after they have left the care of Leicestershire if that is in the best interests of the young person
Be up to date with all their immunisations	Benefit from joined up multi agency working to drive relationship-based approaches	Our discharge planning will secure improved outcomes for care leavers		Support care leavers to become independent adults by helping to secure high quality education, training or employment opportunities
Have improved timeliness of Health Assessments		Make timely decisions regarding permanence and the use of SGO's and Child Arrangement Order to be used where appropriate		
Best possible outcomes for our children				

Appendix A

Corporate Parenting Board

Terms of Reference

- 1) To ensure that the whole Council and partner agencies adopt a nurturing approach to our children in care and care leavers and fulfil their statutory duty as Corporate Parents, in order to achieve continuing improvements in outcomes for looked after children and young people.

- 2) To Champion the interests of Children in Care and care leavers.
- 3) Ensuring that promoting the best interests of looked after children is at the core of decision-making of the partnership

This will involve:

Ensuring that the corporate parenting role is understood and fulfilled by all elected members and senior officers working across all directorates in the Council and by our partners.

- Listening to and responding to the voice of children in care and care leavers by meeting and talking to children and young people in care on a regular basis.
- Ensuring that children and young people in care and care leavers are able to participate in decisions about their care and the shaping and delivery of future services.
- Monitoring and overseeing plans, strategies or policies for looked after children, young people and care leavers to ensure performance is maintained.
- Monitoring the implementation of the Leicestershire Children in Care Pledge
- Taking issues from the Board meeting forward through Senior Officers from across the Council and partner agencies
- Monitoring and reviewing key performance data so that they are achieved and show that looked after children have the best start in life.

The Board will meet four times a year and will be co-chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Families and the Chair of the Children in Care Council.

Membership

- Lead Member for Children and Families (co-chair)
- Chair of the Children in Care Council (co-chair)
- Children in Care nominated by the Children in Care Council
- Director of Children and Family Services
- Cross party Elected members nominated by the Party Groups
- Children and Family Services Lead Officers: Assistant Director Children Social Care and Targeted Early Help, Head of Service Children's Social Care, Service Manager Fostering and Adoption, Service Manager Children in Care, Service Manager Safeguarding Improvement Unit
- Service Manager, Youth Offending Service
- Virtual School Head
- Director of Public Health
- Divisional Director of Families Children and Young People(FYPC) LPT.
- Designated Nurse for Looked after Children
- Assistant Chief Constable or Police Superintendent with lead for Safeguarding
- District Council representative (Housing)
- Adults & Communities Lead Officer
- LSCB Chair

- Employment and Training Lead

Format of the Board

- The Board meeting will include informal break-out sessions and activities to engender good discussion between Board Members and young people
- Venue will be County Hall committee rooms
- Agenda for Corporate Parenting Board to be set by CiCC and Board Members

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