

REPORT TO: Children, Young People & Families
Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 27th January 2020

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Children, Education & Social Care

SUBJECT: Pledge to Children in Care

WARD(S) Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide and update on the implementation of the Pledge to Children in Care and seek continued approval of it.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Members of the Board:

- i) Endorse the Pledge.
- ii) Endorse action to promote the Pledge so it known to the Council, Children's Trust and other partners.
- iii) Identify further actions to support the commitments to Children in Care.
- iv) The Pledge and actions to support the pledge are referred to Executive Board and then to Council for endorsement.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 A good corporate parent must offer everything that a good parent would, including stability. It must address both the difficulties which children in care experience and the challenges of parenting within a complex system of different services. This means that children in care and care leavers should be cared about, not just cared for, and that all aspects of their development should be nurtured requiring a corporate approach across all of the agencies involved in the Children's Trust.

3.2 The corporate parents are the officers and Members of the Council, members of the Children's Trust, and other partner agencies.

3.3 Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services For local authorities (section 9) seeks Local assurances that:

Local authorities will, as a matter of course, want to ensure their structures and organisational arrangements enable them to:

- fulfil their statutory duties effectively (including ensuring that children, young people and families receive effective help and benefit from high educational standards locally);
- be transparent about responsibilities and accountabilities,
- support effective interagency and partnership working.

Section 10) further requires that:

- A local authority should carry out effective assurance checks, integrated as part of their usual decision-making and scrutiny work, of their structures and organisational arrangements. Once any new arrangements are in place, local authorities should review their arrangements regularly to satisfy themselves that they continue to be effective.

3.4 It is equally important that children have a chance to shape and influence the parenting they receive.

3.5 In order to improve the role of the corporate parent the Government announced their expectation that:-

- i) every local authority should put in place arrangements for a Children in Care Council, with direct links to the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member. This would give children in care and care leavers a forum to express their views and influence the services and support they receive
- ii) every local area should set out its 'Pledge' to children in care and care leavers covering the services and support that they should expect to receive
- iii) the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services should be responsible for leading improvements in corporate parenting

3.6 Halton established its Children in Care Council in December 2007. Work on the Pledge commenced in October 2008 and concluded with the young people accepting the final version at their meeting in May 2009. This was endorsed by Executive Board in July 2009.

3.7 The Pledge was reviewed with children in care and care leavers between February and July 2013, through a process of consultation and questionnaires with all children in care over the age of 7 years.

3.8 The Pledge was endorsed by Full Council on 16th October and is supported by the Care Leavers Charter.

3.9 The pledge remains central in all policies and procedures and is reflected in Halton Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers

2017-20, the Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2017– 2020 and the Local Offer.

- 3.10 These key strategies have seen the implementation of innovative service development for our children in care and care leavers delivered on behalf of the Councils commitment to the Pledge.
- 3.11 Our pledge to support the transition to adult life has resulted in the formulation of a Care Leavers Accommodation Group, which has key partners from housing and landlords as members to prioritise sustainable and safe accommodation for our care leavers. Furthermore we have created a monthly 'coffee drop' session for our care leavers whereby they attend to learn how to cook, budget and other skills ready for independence in a relaxed environment.
- 3.12 We have engaged with our Children in Care and Care Leavers in the development of a services for them by creating an environment and opportunity to question and challenge the service area and wider partners at the Partnership board. This is to ensure that the pledge to give them times and space to express your feelings and give you opportunities to influence decisions about your future have meaning and value to our children.
- 3.13 We have trained a number of our Children in care and care leavers as Young Inspectors. Their role is to undertake compliance visits to providers that the service commissions.
- 3.14 The Strategies mentioned above are subject to review and the pledge and the Council's commitment to deliver and develop its promises to our children will remain prevalent in all we do. We as a council will work collectively with the CICC to consult on what matters to them in the developments of such key policies and resulting actions to fulfil them. We will seek the support and influence of the Council, Children's Trust, elected members and other partners in achieving the actions required to promote the best outcomes for our children in care and care leavers.
- 3.15 In 2017 the Children in Care Council reviewed the pledge. There were no significant changes suggested as required. The pledge was re-presented through a workshop session agenda at the Children in Care and Care Leavers Partnership Board.
- 3.16 All key partners and corporate parents were asked to demonstrate how they had committed to the implementation the pledge and how they would continue to meet their obligations in its continued implementation.
- 3.17 The pledge also sits intrinsically within the Care Leavers Local Offer for Halton, which is reviewed annually and currently under review with the Children in Care Council. The outcome of this review will not

impact on the Pledge but serve to reinforce the commitments required within it.

- 3.18 Officers, Members, The Children's Trust and other partners all need to contribute in order to achieve the commitment contained within the Pledge.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Pledge is consistent with national policy, the Care Matters agenda, Halton's multi-agency strategy for Children in Care and legislation.

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Pledge is consistent with the Council's responsibility as a Corporate Parent.

- 5.2 The Halton Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers 2017-2020 is in need of review. The priorities in this strategy are drawn from what our children in care and care leavers have told us is important to them. The strategy reflects what children and young people in Halton have asked for in The Pledge: Our Promise to Children and Young People in Care and Care Leavers. It builds on discussions held with young people at the Children in Care Council on the key issues for them and the support that can best assist them. Work with the children in care council has already commenced.

- 5.3 The revised strategy will not fundamentally change the Pledge to Children in Care but enforce the commitment to promote better outcomes for our Children in Care and Care Leavers by fulfilling our pledge to them.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The Pledge is consistent with ensuring the best possible outcomes for children in care and care leavers and in promoting their life chances.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Improving outcomes for children in care and care leavers and ensuring that they receive the appropriate education and are supported to find employment are essential to their long-term economic prospects.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Improved outcomes will contribute to the emotional health and wellbeing and physical health of children in care and care leavers.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Improving outcomes and raising the aspirations and achievements of children in care and care leavers will contribute to constructive and long term options for them.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

Improved outcomes for children in care and care leavers will enhance their own and the borough' economic environment.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 There are no significant risks associated with the Pledge.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Improving the life chances of children in care and care leavers through ensuring that they receive the services and support they require, will contribute to meeting the needs of this vulnerable group.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Halton Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers 2017-20	Rutland House	Liz Davenport
Care Leavers Local Offer for Halton	Rutland House	Liz Davenport
Children & Young Person's Act 2008	DCSF website	Liz Davenport