

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 13th December, 2011

10.00 am

**Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall,
Maidstone**





AGENDA

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 13th December, 2011, at 10.00 am
Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone

Ask for: **Peter Sass**
Telephone: **01622 694002**

Membership

Liberal Democrat (1): Mrs T Dean (Chairman)

Conservative (11): Mr R F Manning, Mr A R Chell, Mr D A Hirst, Mr E E C Hotson, Mr M J Jarvis, Mr R E King, Mrs J P Law, Mr R L H Long, TD, Mr M J Northey, Mr J E Scholes and Mr C P Smith

Labour (1) Mr G Cowan

Independent (1) Mr R J Lees

Church Dr A Bamford, The Reverend N Genders and Mr A Tear

Representatives (3):

Parent Governor (2): Mr B Critchley and Mr P Myers

Refreshments will be available 15 minutes before the start of the meeting

Timing of items as shown below is approximate and subject to change.

County Councillors who are not Members of the Committee but who wish to ask questions at the meeting are asked to notify the Chairman of their questions in advance.

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UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)

A. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

- A1 Introduction/Webcasting
- A2 Substitutes
- A3 Declarations of Interests by Members in Items on the Agenda for this Meeting
- A4 Minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2011 (Pages 1 - 10)
- A5 Follow-up Items from Cabinet Scrutiny Committee (Pages 11 - 14)
- A6 Notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on 15 September (Pages 15 - 18)
- A7 Notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on 14 October (Pages 19 - 22)
- A8 Notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on 2 December - to follow

B. CABINET/CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS AT VARIANCE TO APPROVED BUDGET OR POLICY FRAMEWORK

C. CABINET DECISIONS

- C1 Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy (Cabinet report attached) (Pages 23 - 80)

Mrs J Whittle, Cabinet Member Specialist Children's Services, Mr A Ireland, Director of Families and Social Care, Ms L Totman, Head of Corporate Parenting and Mr P Brightwell, Performance and Quality Assurance Manager (LAC) have been invited to attend the meeting from 10am to answer Members' questions on this item.

D. CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

EXEMPT ITEMS

(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)

Peter Sass
Head of Democratic Services
(01622) 694002

Monday, 5 December 2011

Please note that any background documents referred to in the accompanying papers maybe inspected by arrangement with the officer responsible for preparing the relevant report.

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 25 July 2011.

PRESENT: Mrs T Dean (Chairman), Mr G Cowan, Mr R F Manning, Mr D A Hirst, Mr E E C Hotson, Mr M J Jarvis, Mrs J P Law, Mr R J Lees, Mr R L H Long, TD, Mr M J Northey, Mr J E Scholes, Mr C P Smith and Mr J R Bullock, MBE (Substitute for Mr R E King)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE, Mr D Farrell, Mr D Frost, Cllr Pam Hawkins, Ms T Miah, Mr L Knight and Mr D Nicholls

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms A Honey (Corporate Director, Customer and Communities), Ms A Slaven (Director of Service Improvement), Mr N Baker (Head of Kent Youth Service), Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Policy Overview)) and Mr A Webb (Research Officer to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

28. Minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2011
(Item A4)

(1) RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2011 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

29. Committee Membership
(Item)

(1) The Chairman advised Members that Mrs Jean Law had replaced Mr Robert Brookbank on the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee.

30. Follow-up Items from Cabinet Scrutiny Committee
(Item A5)

(1) Referring to the recommendation relating to the item KCC's Performance Management Framework, the Chairman explained that the meeting with the POSC Chairmen, Leader, Deputy Leader, Leaders of the other parties and Mr Lees was due to be held after the meeting of Cabinet Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED: that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee note the follow-up items report and responses to previous recommendations.

31. Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on 15 July 2011
(Item A6)

RESOLVED: that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee approve the notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on 15 July 2011.

32. Kent Youth Service - Commissioning Model Public Consultation

(Item C1)

Mr M Hill, Cabinet Member, Customer and Communities, Ms A Honey, Corporate Director, Customer and Communities, Ms A Slaven, Director of Service Improvement, Mr N Baker, Head of Integrated Youth Services, Mr D Farrell, Save Our Services, Ms T Miah, Chair of Kent Youth County Council, Mr D Frost, Maidstone Coalition of Resistance, Mr D Nicholls, National Secretary, Community and Youth Workers in Unite, Ms P Hawkins, District Councillor, Middle Deal & Sholden Ward, and Mr L Knight, Former Trustee, Aylesham Youth Club, were present for this item.

(1) Mr Hill introduced the item, explaining that:

- the decision taken at Cabinet was to consult
- it would be a genuine consultation, because it was what the young people of Kent deserved and what he and his officers needed to inform the proposals
- Kent had an excellent Youth Service, which he supported greatly
- rather than being driven by savings the proposals were an opportunity to reform, reshape and update the Youth service
- that the proposals were based on three important principles:
 - the 'jewels in the crown' (the Duke of Edinburgh Award, outdoor education and youth participation) would be preserved
 - a robust in-house service would be maintained; and
 - that the proposals would be fully discussed and consulted upon before implementation

(2) Mr Baker gave a presentation about the proposed new operating model of the Kent Youth Service (KYS), which covered:

- The challenge
- The proposal
- Rationale
- The offer
- The plan – direct delivery
- The plan – commissioning
- National context; and
- Consultation

(3) The external witnesses were then invited to give their statements:

Dara Farrell, MYP, Save Our Services

(4) Mr Farrell welcomed Mr Hill's comments on his approach to the consultation; he felt that there was great concern among young people across the county, having seen proposals which suggested that some youth centres were to close. He spoke of his own experience as a young person growing up in a single parent family in Stanhope, how involvement of the Youth Service had helped him go on to meet borough councillors, county councillors and MPs and then represent Kent Youth County Council (KYCC) all over Europe, whereas many of his peers had already done prison sentences.

(5) Mr Farrell expressed a view that, whilst he agreed that there should be a consultation, it should have been preceded by discussions with young people. He went on to express the following concerns:

- that the voluntary sector might not be supported by the use of Youth Service centres and the advice of staff in future
- that the number of street-based youth workers may be reduced; that the large number of valuable face-to-face contacts with young people would diminish; and that current level of provision and its corresponding benefits to young people would not be maintained
- that 'hubs' in the proposals were presumably chosen due to accessibility, but that other factors such as deprivation should have been taken into account
- that private companies and the voluntary sector would replace youth workers with three years of training, and that new providers would have to turn a profit

(6) In response to questions from Members, Mr Farrell also stated that:

- that more, rather than less, officers in the Youth Service should be working to help support the voluntary sector
- that money from sources such as Kent's Big Society Fund or the money being spent by Government on the National Citizen Service could be used to finance the Youth Service as an alternative to cuts
- that the Equality Impact Assessment could be more detailed, including the potential effects on local communities

Tamanna Miah, MYP, Chair of Kent Youth County Council

(7) Ms Miah felt that youth services presented life-changing opportunities and cited a study which showed that joining a youth club could improve educational attainment. She stated a number of other benefits of youth centres, including:

- that they provided somewhere for young people to go, and reduced incidences of young people congregating on the streets
- that they led to a reduction in antisocial behaviour

(8) Ms Miah expressed a view that young people should have been involved during the formulation of the proposals and urged that they be consulted and involved throughout the process. She was also concerned that the long term benefits which had resulted from investment in youth services may be lost, and made the point that investment in preventative services avoided costly interventions in future. Ms Miah was also worried about the quality of youth services being affected by the move to the commissioning model, as a result of voluntary and community sector youth workers not having the same level of training or experience as in-house staff. She suggested establishing young commissioner groups, in which young people would be trained to quality assure or inspect the services and to take part in the commissioning process.

(9) In response to questions from Members, Ms Miah also stated that she would be willing to get involved in the design and commissioning of services, that a group would be formed within KYCC to look at this and that young people would have a meaningful role to play.

Daniel Frost, Maidstone Coalition of Resistance against Cuts and Privatisation

(10) Mr Frost paid tribute to KYS, stating that it was delivered to a high standard and was a service of great value to the people of Kent. He referred to a user survey carried out by KYS in 2010, which found that 4 out of 5 respondents felt they had gained confidence as a result of the service and a majority found it easy to get to their nearest centre or project. Mr Frost expressed concern at the potential impact of the savings and felt that the proposals had not been thought through properly, and that some of the passages were vague.

(11) In reference to the proposals for Maidstone, Mr Frost conveyed his misgivings about a possible paucity of provision in relation to its large population of young people and its geographical area, and in particular a lack of accessibility to youth services for young people living in villages in the east of the borough. Referring to the £1.2m set aside for commissioning and the fact that this was a 'starting point', he expressed a view that the proposed model may end up costing more money than the current efficient system of direct delivery.

(12) In response to a number of questions from Members, Mr Frost also made the following points:

- that KCC's core provision existed precisely because there were no alternative providers willing or able to do so
- that KCC should have had conversations with potential providers, rather than assuming they would come forward to provide services
- that he had concerns that some providers, e.g church groups, may not be able to provide appropriate support to minority communities

Doug Nicholls, National Secretary, Community and Youth Workers in Unite

(13) Mr Nicholls stated that CYWU had always held KYS in high regard, and KYS had received good Ofsted reports despite comparatively low spend per capita. He referred to a recent Parliamentary Education Select Committee report which congratulated the youth services sector on making limited resources go a long way, and informed Members that, on average, every £1 spent on youth services generated £8 of spend in the voluntary sector, with investment in youth services avoiding higher spending in other services. Mr Nicholls also pointed out that per capita spend on youth services in Kent had declined in recent years, and that the proposals should be seen in the context of reducing the direct provision of an already depleted budget.

(14) Mr Nicholls welcomed a number of elements of the report, including:

- the consultation, and the union's opportunity to participate in the discussions
- the commitment to maintaining professional terms and conditions through the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) terms and conditions
- the commitment to informal education and personal and social education as the heart of youth work
- the recognition of youth work as a universal service, with open-access provision

(15) Mr Nicholls cited a number of examples of councils where commissioning out youth services had failed, including Bromley, Cumbria and Westminster; he felt this

demonstrated that there was no evidence that commissioning out services would work and there was a risk that it may end up costing more than the current model. He stated that organisations that were committed to youth services were already in partnership with their local council.

(16) In response to questions from Members, Mr Nicholls made a number of points, including:

- There was not money in the voluntary sector to replace any reduction in council funding; fund-raising formed part of youth workers' training and they would already be aware of any sources of funding available
- A range of potential providers were asked about moving into youth services by a Parliamentary Education Select Committee, and they had not demonstrated a will to do so
- Launching the consultation would not help identify new sources of funding or organisations wanting to become involved in youth services provision, due to the lack of funding and new companies in the sector
- Most youth centres were already contributed to by local volunteers and expecting them to run centres without the infrastructure and professional advice would be a retrograde step
- Studies had shown the benefits of youth services included reductions in crime, vandalism, teen pregnancy and anti-social behaviour, and that without positive activities, services such as police and health would have greater involvement.
- That he would not expect young people to travel to youth centres if there was a cost, or if they had to travel from one town to another
- That the consultation documents were comprehensive, well-argued and adequate to enable public discussion, but adaptation and clarification (particularly regarding what measures would compensate any reduction in front line delivery) would help ensure the proposals were popularly understood.

Councillor Pam Hawkins, District Councillor, Middle Deal & Sholden Ward

(17) Ms Hawkins spoke about the Linwood Youth Centre in Deal, how it had been successful as a youth centre, and how a number of groups also made use of the building. She expressed concern that if the centre was closed, the nearest hub under the proposals would be 9.5 miles away, and young people would be unlikely to travel there, and that outreach work would not be successful in reducing instances of young people hanging around on street corners. Ms Hawkins also spoke of the other organisations that used the centre, and the valuable work they had done, particularly in helping people from disadvantaged backgrounds. She felt that if there were reductions to the funding of youth services, it would impact on a whole generation of young people, as well as wider society.

(18) In response to questions from Members, Ms Hawkins made a number of points, including:

- Youth services in Kent were being run efficiently and should not be dismantled
- Bus services would not be adequate for young people in her area to travel 9.5 miles to the nearest proposed hub, and she felt that young people would tend only to go to a youth centre in walking distance

- Youth work undertaken by volunteers in her area could be expanded if there was adequate funding and safeguarding

Lawrence Knight, Former Trustee, Aylesham Youth Club

(19) Mr Knight, who had been involved in three charitable trusts in his community, advocated partnership with communities and innovation. He cited the example of Aylesham Youth Club, where a management committee took over financial responsibilities for the running of the club. Mr Knight also cited an example where a scrutiny meeting of Dover District Council had gone out into the community and spoken to young people to find out what they wanted, and he urged that young people be listened to during the consultation process.

(20) Mr Knight made the point that areas of deprivation would need to be considered as part of the proposals. He also spoke of the need to be realistic about the fact that there would not be lots of providers queuing up with funding to take over services. Mr Knight also felt it was important to know what provision already existed in communities, and cautioned that not every community had people who could draw up plans, etc.

(21) In response to a question about how the service could be made more efficient, Mr Farrell felt that the efficiencies that could have been made had been made and that trying to make further savings would result in a threadbare service, and Mr Frost felt that management savings would be the only option.

(22) The Chairman explained that the running order of questions would be as follows:

- Budget and/or other savings
- The shape of council provision that would remain under the proposals
- Commissioned services
- Other questions

Budget and/or other savings

(23) Responding to a question about what reductions would be made to the KYS budget, Mr Baker explained that:

- there would be a reduction in direct provision of £1.7m
- there would be an increase in partnership award grants to voluntary organisations from £360k to £1.2m (although more funding might be accessed, for example in partnership with district or borough councils)
- the net result would be a reduction of approximately £900k

(24) Referring to the written question submitted by Mr Copeland, the Chairman asked whether the Council could make a commitment to provide 50% of the capital funding required to open a Youth Café in the Stag in Sevenoaks. Mr Hill explained that he had a totally open mind and the purpose of the consultation was to consider any option which enabled Kent to deliver a first-class youth service.

(25) In response to a question about uncertainties related to the Localism Bill would be managed in relation to capital assets, Mr Hill explained that he would deal with the situation when it arose, and Mr Baker stated that this had been raised both in the

consultation documents and with colleagues in Property Group. Mr Baker explained that there were plans to take a paper to Cabinet for Members to consider with a list of options, including gifting a centre or providing a long term lease, before going to tender in early 2012.

(26) In respect of the source of the total budget, and whether this included Government funding, Mr Baker explained that it was mostly KCC-based, except the Early Intervention Grant (EIG) from Government, which had had the ring-fencing removed. The Government had committed to continue providing EIG funding into the future.

(27) Further detail in relation to the budget and savings was elicited during questions from Members, including that:

- the proposed reduction of staff by 64.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTEs) related to approximately 190 staff, many of whom worked part time hours.
- current thinking was that the Big Society Fund would provide a mixture of loans and grants to community groups, but loans were favoured because they enabled funding to be recycled
- the 'skeleton service' which might be used to mitigate the risk of the required savings not being met in 2012/13 related to the service ceasing over the summer holidays and reverting to the 'core offer'
- the External Funding Officer kept track of the funding opportunities available and the budget would be supplemented by funding from Public Health, Kent Drug and Alcohol Team, the Youth Offending Service and others
- the only fixed points were having a better youth service and making a £900k saving, due to the fact that the Customer and Communities budget was being reduced by 35%

The shape of council provision that would remain under the proposals

(28) In response to questions from Members, Mr Baker stated that:

- the centres proposed as hubs were selected by the senior management team and representatives from the voluntary sector, using a number of criteria, which Mr Baker undertook to provide after the meeting (*post meeting note: paragraph 7.3 of Appendix A of the agenda papers contain these criteria*)
- the proposals included a balance of open access across the districts, with a commissioning budget which could be more targeted depending on the needs of the local community, including deprivation

Commissioned services

(29) Replying to a question about how buildings would be disposed of, if no alternative provider came forward, Mr Hill stated that it would be necessary to look at the circumstances in each area, but if a specific building was no longer required it would be sold.

(30) Referencing a point made at Cabinet about the possibility of greater capacity for commissioning from community organisations in more affluent areas, a question was asked how this might be managed. Mr Hill explained that the appetite in each area for provision by community organisations was not yet known, but that there might be

greater spirit in more deprived areas, and with targeted funding small investments could result in large returns. Ms Slaven added that, should the proposals go ahead, issues around where to target resources would be dealt with under the service specification process.

(31) In response to a query about what control the Council intended to exercise over the commissioning process, Mr Baker explained that:

- the Council was consulting on the needs analysis and outcomes framework that would be used with providers.
- Direct provision would continue to be delivered by professionally qualified youth workers, but it would be unlikely that professional qualifications would be an absolute requirement for commissioned providers
- the Council was committed to driving up quality across both direct and commissioned provision, including by use of a quality assurance framework
- two workforce development coordinators would be looking at training opportunities for staff across the service

(32) Ms Slaven made the point that the quality of provision in the voluntary sector was excellent, and she felt that there should be no implication that it was of a lower standard than that provided by KCC, although it would be important to ensure that quality was maintained through the appropriate award of contracts through the tendering process.

(33) Referring to examples cited earlier of other Councils where outsourcing youth services had not worked, a question was raised about whether this had been taken account during the formulation of the proposals. Mr Baker explained that he had spoken to Councils around the country, and many had looked at moving to a commissioning model, but it would be premature to draw conclusions either way although those who were further ahead with the process had already received significant interest from voluntary organisations.

(34) A number of other points were made in response to questions from Members, including that:

- Representatives from Kent Council for Voluntary Youth Services and Kent Youth had been consulted during the formulation of the proposals
- A supplementary finance sheet could be produced which would show investment in youth services additional to core funding
- A simpler document would be produced alongside the consultation documents which would contain the salient points of the proposals
- That the list of intended consultees was not exhaustive, and the police, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and colleagues in parish councils were already involved

Other questions

(35) In response to further questions from the witnesses, the following points were made:

- The Christchurch youth centre would be considered in the same way as any other youth centre which may have to be disposed of under the proposals

- The Stag youth café had previously not been successful when put in front of the Youth Capital Fund for funding, but it would be reasonable to think about how youth work could be delivered in other settings
- There would be a clear role for quality assurance across both direct and commissioned provision, through a quality assurance framework and a programme of face-to-face visits

(36) The Chairman proposed, and Mr Cowan seconded, that the Committee recommend that a letter be written to Government suggesting that a dedicated, ring-fenced fund be allocated for youth work in the future. The motion was not carried.

(37) The Chairman proposed and Mr Cowan seconded, that the Committee require implementation of the decision to be postponed, pending reconsideration of the matter in the light of the Committee's comments by Cabinet. The motion was not carried.

(38) Mr Manning proposed and Mr Bullock seconded, that the Committee express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision. The motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED: that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee:

(39) Thank Mr Hill, Ms Honey, Ms Slaven, Mr Baker, Mr Farrell, Ms Miah, Mr Frost, Mr Nicholls, Cllr Hawkins and Mr Knight for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions.

(40) Welcome the undertaking given by the Cabinet Member that the comments and suggestions made had been noted and would be incorporated, possibly as an appendix, into the main consultation document. Furthermore, welcome the assurance given by the Cabinet Member that a succinct and user-friendly summary would also accompany the main consultation proposals.

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By: Peter Sass - Head of Democratic Services

To: Cabinet Scrutiny Committee – 13 December 2011

Subject: Follow up items and Decisions from Cabinet Scrutiny Committee –
25 July 2011.

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report sets out the decisions from the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and items which the Committee has raised previously for follow up

Introduction

1. This is a rolling schedule of information requested previously by the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee.
2. If the information supplied is satisfactory it will be removed following the meeting, but if the Committee should find the information to be unsatisfactory it will remain on the schedule with a request for further information.
3. The decisions from the meeting of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee on 25 July 2011 are set out in the table below along with the response of the relevant Cabinet Member.

Recommendation

4. That the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee notes the responses to the issues raised previously.

Contact: Peter Sass
peter.sass@kent.gov.uk

01622 694002

Background Information: *Nil*

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1. Follow up items of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

Follow-up items from Cabinet Scrutiny Committee – Tracking sheet				5 December 2011
Item	Date of meeting	Recommendation	Status	Notes
Highways Business Plan IMG - Gulley Emptying Schedules	10/12/08	1	RESPONSE RECEIVED	Briefing note circulated to Members 2 December 2011
Bold Steps for Kent - The Medium Term Plan to 2014	08/12/10	8	OUTSTANDING	Officers are pursuing a response to this recommendation.

Kent Youth Service - Commissioning Model Public Consultation (25 July 2011)

Cabinet portfolio: Mr M Hill

Synopsis: The report to Cabinet contained a proposal for consultation outlining the vision for the transformation of Kent Youth Service and the innovative model of service delivery.

Reason for call-in: Members wished to examine in detail which alternative options of making savings to the Youth Service budget had been explored, whether other provider organisations would be willing and able to provide youth services under the proposed commissioning model, and the potential consequences of the proposals, including costs.

Recommendations and responses:

1. Thank Mr Hill, Ms Honey, Ms Slaven, Mr Baker, Mr Farrell, Ms Miah, Mr Frost, Mr Nicholls, Ms Hawkins and Mr Knight for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions.

2. Welcome the undertaking given by the Cabinet Member that the comments and suggestions made had been noted and would be incorporated, possibly as an appendix, into the main consultation document. Furthermore, welcome the assurance given by the Cabinet Member that a succinct and user-friendly summary would also accompany the main consultation proposals.

Cabinet Member's Response:

A Young People's Summary of the key Service Transformation proposals has been produced and circulated widely across the county. Comments received from members of Cabinet Scrutiny have been noted and will be addressed as part of the final report that will be produced for the Cabinet Member following the end of consultation and prior to any final decision being made.

Date of Response: 15 August 2011

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

INFORMAL MEMBER GROUP ON BUDGETARY ISSUES

NOTES of a meeting of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held in the Wantsum Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 15 September 2011.

PRESENT: Mrs T Dean (Chairman), Mr G Cowan, Mr R J Lees and Mr R F Manning

ALSO PRESENT: Miss S J Carey and Mr J D Simmonds

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr A Wood (Acting Corporate Director of Finance and Procurement), Mr D Shipton (Acting Head of Financial Strategy), Mrs A Taylor (Research Officer to Cabinet Scrutiny Committee) and Mr A Webb (Research Officer to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**46. Notes of Previous Meeting on 15 July 2011 (attached for approval)**
(Item 1)

- (1) Regarding Item 44 paragraph 2 Mr Wood would forward Members an email he had received regarding the cost of agency staff in Families and Social Care Directorate.

RESOLVED: that the notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on Friday 15 July 2011 were approved as a correct record.

47. Revenue and Capital Budgets, Key Activity and Risk Monitoring 2011 - 12 (Cabinet report attached)
(Item 2)

- (1) This was the first full monitoring report to Cabinet for 2011 – 2012 and it showed a relatively small net overspend although this is made up of a number of over and under spends.
- (2) The most significant pressures are forecast within the Specialist Children's Services but as the backlog of cases is resolved there should be a reduction in provision required.
- (3) The Revenue and Capital Budgets, Key Activity and Risk Monitoring 2011-12 report had also been discussed by the Governance and Audit Committee on 14 September, and Mr Wood explained that there was a sufficient degree of assurance regarding the delivery of savings.
- (4) Mr Wood undertook to follow up a response about the transfer of the Dorothy Lucy Centre.

- (5) There were continuing difficulties around the forecasting for demand for Children's Services over the coming years. Work was being undertaken within the Families and Social Care Directorate to determine whether further investment in prevention would result in a larger payback to Kent. Investment into Families and Social Care had resulted in the recruitment of more experienced social workers, retention was currently good, and the quality of intervention was vital in ensuring the best possible care for those in the Social Care system. The Council was also looking closely at improvements to the adoption service as a long term strategy.
- (6) On the subject of Academies, Members asked questions around the financial responsibility of any Academies which might fail. Mr Simmonds explained that KCC was only able to operate within the current Government legislation and it would not be practicable for KCC to make provision for such an event.
- (7) Mr Wood undertook to follow up queries over the operational circumstances (routine scheduled maintenance) at Allington Waste to Energy Plant.
- (8) In relation to the Community Engagement Managers (CEMs) a decision had been made to retain the currently level of 12 CEMs (there was a proposal to reduce the number to 6) which would result in an under delivery of the existing savings target and the need to identify alternative savings within the Customer and Communities Directorate.
- (9) Members queried the level of outstanding debt owed to KCC (appendix 2 point 3). Mr Wood explained there had been a system failure in June which meant the sundry debt could not be calculated, the May and July figures showed the accurate position.

RESOLVED that subject to the above information being supplied Members note the Revenue and Capital Budgets, Key Activity and Risk Monitoring 2011 - 12

48. Consultation on Local Government Resource Review (proposals for retention of business rates)

(Item 3)

- (1) Mr Shipton explained to Members that the report on the Government's consultation was largely as anticipated in the presentation on the retention of business rates that had been given to IMG Members earlier in the year.
- (2) The Government was looking to replace Formula Grant settlement for 2013/14 and beyond and replace it with a system that allows authorities to retain any growth in business rates collected. The existing national reallocation of resources through the Formula would be set as a baseline and authorities which were forecast to collect more in business rates than the formula would pay the difference into a national pool and vice versa, authorities which were forecast to collect less than the formula would receive a top-up from the tariff pool. Thereafter any growth in the business rate taxbase would be retained by individual authorities (the consultation is seeking views whether all of the inflationary uplift should be applied to the baseline each year or whether some should be included in the retention)

- (3) It is proposed there would be an option to reset the baseline to reflect changed circumstances although it is understood that ministers are in favour of a long period (up to 10 years) should pass before any reset.
- (4) There is a potential downside for authorities which collect less business rates as their baseline would not be reviewed and they would only get the same tariff/top-up based on the estimated level. This would in effect mean a reduced grant settlement. The consultation includes proposals for a national “shock pot” as a form of insurance against reduced business rates or very low growth/high spending needs.
- (5) The Kent Finance Officers Association has had initial discussions with the Chief Executives of other authorities about options to pool business rates growth (and thus share the risk of any volatility) and there had been mixed views; KCC had particular concerns around the year upon year volatility of the proposals and the impact the changes could have on individual District Authorities.
- (6) The consultation has not got any other radical options to address the apparent inverse correlation between the ability to raise business rates and need to spend on local authority services (other than crystallising the existing allocations, shock pot and allowing pooling). KCC’s initial assessment is that this is a missed opportunity to address concerns about the lack of a link between the tax paid by local businesses and the level of service.
- (7) The consultation closes on 24 October and views were currently being gathered for a response. As set out in para 4.4 of the report there were concerns over the contradictions within the proposals, and the split in two tier areas between county and district authorities. KCC Finance are currently analysing what the picture would have looked like in each district over the past 5 years had the proposed system been in place.
- (8) The system would, however, give Kent the opportunity to borrow against future receipts.

RESOLVED that Members note the Consultation on Local Government Resource Review

49. Draft Budget IMG meeting dates 2012
(Item 4)

RESOLVED: that the meeting dates were agreed

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

INFORMAL MEMBER GROUP ON BUDGETARY ISSUES

NOTES of a meeting of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held in the Room 1.47, Sessions House on Friday, 14 October 2011.

PRESENT: Mrs T Dean (Chairman), Mr R F Manning and Mr G Cowan

ALSO PRESENT: Ms S J Carey and Mr J D Simmonds

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr A Wood (Acting Corporate Director of Finance and Procurement), Mr D Shipton (Acting Head of Financial Strategy), Mr K Abbott (Finance Business Partner, ELS Directorate), Mr N Vickers (Head of Financial Services), Mrs A Taylor (Research Officer to Cabinet Scrutiny Committee) and Mr A Webb (Research Officer to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

50. Notes of Previous Meeting on 15 September 2011 (attached for approval)
(Item 1)

RESOLVED: that the notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on Thursday 15 September 2011 were approved as a correct record.

51. Revenue & Capital Budgets Monitoring Exception Report (Cabinet report attached)
(Item 2)

- (1) The net revenue pressure for the Council was currently £1.3 million, officers were confident that the proposed management action of £500,000, shown in table 1 of the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Exception Report would be delivered.
- (2) Officers were still keeping a careful eye on the Specialist Children's Services portfolio, the demand had not levelled off as it perhaps had been expected to although there had been a reduction in the spend on additional agency staff costs. There had been a good response to recruitment of social workers and it was expected that social workers would be appointed in place of agency staff. Mr Wood confirmed that he would ask Ms Beer for a directive on temporary staff.
- (3) The forecast position for the Environment, Highways and Waste portfolio remained at an underspend of £2.186m; officers were confident that this would be delivered.
- (4) Adult Social Care and Public Health – the forecast underspend had increased slightly to £0.560m, discussions were being had over whether it would be appropriate to introduce a moratorium on non-essential, non client related spend. The Council's record on forecasting in the Adult Social Care and Public Health directorate was good.

- (5) Following a query over the increase in the pressure on the Fostering service Mr Wood confirmed that this was as a result of the increase in forecast costs from Legal Services. Around £3.5m is forecast to overspend on the fostering service as a consequence of clearing the backlog of cases. There was a need to prevent children from entering the foster system in the first place. It was anticipated that it would take 2-3years to get back to the position that the Council was in 18months ago.
- (6) In relation to the underspend on Older People Direct Payments the trend remained static, this was down to client choice and the net effect of older people using direct payments was neutral.
- (7) The Environment, Highways and Waste Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee would receive an options paper on the mid Kent waste project and direction of travel.
- (8) Within the Education, Learning and Skills portfolio there was a £800,000 projected reduction due to re-phasing and delays.
- (9) POST MEETING NOTE: Members discussed the future budget savings and asked that an update be provided at the next meeting of the Budget IMG on future years' savings. Members acknowledged the contributions made by the finance staff to the Budget IMG but reiterated that they expected to be kept apprised of any changes to the Medium Term Plan or to information previously supplied.

RESOLVED that Members of the Budget IMG note the Revenue and Budget Monitoring Exception Report and ask that a report on future years' budget savings be provided at the next meeting of the Budget IMG on 2 December.

52. Update on POSC IMGs (verbal update)

(Item 3)

- (1) Mr Shipton provided Members with an update on the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committees (POSCs) Budget Informal Member Groups (IMGs) that had been held to date. The Budget IMGs will report back to their own POSCs in November.

RESOLVED that Members note the update on the POSC Budget IMGs.

53. Further Delegation of Funding to Schools (to follow)

(Item 4)

- (1) Keith Abbott presented his report on Further Delegation of Dedicated Schools Grant to Schools.
- (2) 1(a), (b) and (c) set out the reasons for delegation. There had been an encouraging 70% response rate to the consultation held over the summer. Appendix 1 set out the recommendations which Members were asked to agree or endorse.

- (3) There were anxieties over some of the proposals, for example, the delegation of cover for maternity leave. The Schools funding forum would cover any gap in year 1.
- (4) Concerns were raised around the control of expenditure; Members were assured that the majority of schools had a dedicated finance resource.
- (5) There were strong views from the schools around the Family Liaison Officers, and efforts were being focussed around preventative measures.

RESOLVED that Members note the Further Delegation of Funding to Schools

54. Update on Pensions

(Item 5)

- (1) Nick Vickers introduced his report on the Government's draft proposals for achieve savings within the Local Government Pension Scheme.
- (2) In the CSR 2010 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that employee contribution rates would increase by 3.2%.
- (3) 2 options had been put forward by the Department for Communities and Local Government. It was unclear why the option of increasing the retirement age had not been put forward, the Council's response from the Superannuation Fund Committee would include support for the increase in retirement age. From 1 April the new contributions would have to be paid, the Trades Unions were opposed to the proposals within the Hutton review and wanted to retain the final salary pension scheme.
- (4) There would be a further detailed report on Pensions to the November Corporate Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that Members note the update on Pensions.

55. Dates of Budget IMG 2012

(Item 6)

RESOLVED that Members note the dates of the Budget IMG meetings for 2012

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By: Peter Sass: Head of Democratic Services
To: Cabinet Scrutiny Committee – 13 December 2011
Subject: Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy

Background

- (1) Members wish to examine the deliverability of the Looked After Children Strategy, in particular:
- (a) The reduction of numbers of Looked After Children (LAC) and how will this be achieved
 - (b) Placements of LAC by KCC outside of Kent and the circumstances surrounding these placements
 - (c) The movement towards Permanently Looked After Children (PLAC)
 - (d) In relation to the Reduction in Volumes referred to in the Children's Services Improvement Plan - Quarterly Update, the fact that there has been no reduction in LAC (despite a reduction in all other indicators)
 - (e) How the £19.8million to be spent on Children's Social Services in 2012/13 (as referred to in the Autumn Budget Statement) will be allocated

Guests

- (2) Mrs J Whittle, Cabinet Member Specialist Children's Services, Mr A Ireland, Director of Families and Social Care, Ms L Totman, Head of Corporate Parenting and Mr P Brightwell, Performance and Quality Assurance Manager (LAC) have been invited to attend the meeting from 10am to answer Members' questions on this item.

Options for the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

- (3) The Cabinet Scrutiny Committee may:
- (a) make no comments
 - (b) express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision
 - (c) require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending reconsideration of the matter in the light of the Committee's comments by whoever took the decision or
 - (d) require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending consideration of the matter by the full Council.

Contact: Anna Taylor Tel: 01622 694764

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By: Jenny Whittle, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services
Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director, Families and Social Care

To: Cabinet – 5 December 2011

Subject: **KENT'S MULTI-AGENCY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN STRATEGY**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report presents the draft Looked After Children Strategy.

Recommendations: Cabinet is asked to ENDORSE the Multi- agency Looked After Children Strategy.

Introduction

1. (1) Kent County Council's improvement notice includes a requirement to put in place a detailed Looked After Children Strategy that sets out how the authority and its partner agencies will promote better outcomes for its looked after children and care leavers.

(2) The strategy has been influenced by feedback and contributions from all key agencies and services - schools and further education colleges, health services, Connexions, Catch 22, Young Lives Foundation and through the following boards; all of whom have endorsed the strategy:

- Kent's Corporate Parenting Group – May 2011 and July 2011
- Kent's Safeguarding Children's Board – May 2011
- The Corporate Parenting Panel – July 2011

(3) A commitment to support the implementation of the Looked After Children Strategy will be sought from the Kent Association of Headteachers.

(4) The strategy also includes contributions by children and young people through Kent's Children in Care Council. These are outlined in the strategy.

(5) The strategy contains 2 annexes that underpin the strategy:

- Annex A sets out the roles and responsibilities of professionals/staff involved in delivering corporate parenting. This was a specific issue highlighted by Ofsted as needing to be part of a looked after children strategy.

- Annex B outlines Kent's pledge to looked after children and care leavers.

(5) The strategy is also underpinned by the Looked After Children Work Plan; setting out the actions that are being undertaken with respect to looked after children and care leavers to achieve Kent's improvement plan, and by the placement strategy (under development), which is a 3 year strategy seeking to reduce looked after children numbers and overall expenditure on looked after children by the end of March 2015.

Financial Implications

2. The strategy is underpinned by Kent County Council's Specialist Children's Services' placement strategy, which seeks to reduce numbers and expenditure required to support looked after children, whilst also delivering better outcomes.

Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

3. The strategy supports Bold Steps, especially focusing on tackling disadvantage and supporting independence through improving outcomes and reducing numbers of looked after children.

Legal Implications

4. None envisaged. The strategy encourages improved practice which is in line with existing legislation whilst encouraging a reduction in bureaucracy that can get in the way of promoting better outcomes for looked after children / care leavers.

Equality Impact Assessments

5. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and no specific issues were identified from this assessment that required further attention in the strategy.

Implementation Proposals

6. (1) Each agency involved in delivering corporate parenting for looked after children and care leavers will be required to develop an operational plan setting out how they will contribute to delivering the looked after children strategy.

(2) These plans will be presented to the Kent Corporate Parenting Group and Corporate Parenting Panel for endorsement and review.

(3) An annual report from Kent Corporate Parenting Group, setting out progress in delivering the strategy, is to be presented to senior management groups/boards and member boards.

(4) The placement strategy will be a key driver in delivering the changes in practice and performance that are reflected in the objectives of the multi-agency Looked After Children Strategy. Members of Kent Corporate Parenting Group will be asked to secure support from their agencies/services to ensure that the objectives set out in the placement strategy are achieved. In this respect the placement strategy is seen as being something that is in the interests of all agencies involved in delivering corporate parenting; as well as promoting better outcomes for children and young people through strengthening their sense of permanency and belonging.

(5) Officers are in the process of developing Area/District based operational plans that will support the implementation of the strategy.

Risk and Business Continuity Management

7. The need for a multi-agency strategy was identified by Ofsted and is included in the requirements outlined by the Secretary of State in the improvement notice to Kent County Council.

Consultation and Communication

8. (1) The strategy has been consulted on widely - see Section 1 (2) of this report – including seeking the views of carers, professionals, elected members (via the Corporate Parenting Board) and children / young people.

(2) An executive summary of the strategy is to be produced. A summary of the strategy for children and young people will also be developed in liaison with Kent's Children in Care Council.

Sustainability and Rural Proofing Implications

9. The planned reduction in numbers of looked after children through the placement strategy includes measures to ensure that reductions made will be sustainable in the longer term, therefore maintaining effective services but at a lower cost (ie more for less).

Are there any Personnel or Health and Safety Issues which are relevant?

10. None envisaged.

Alternatives and Options

11. None. A multi-agency looked after children strategy is a requirement from the Secretary of State.

Conclusions

12. (1) The Looked After Children Strategy seeks to improve outcomes for looked after children / care leavers through enabling all key agencies to work together under shared goals and objectives in order to deliver good and effective corporate parenting.

(2) In addition to being a specific requirement from the Secretary of State, the implementation of the strategy will also enable opportunities to reduce the numbers of children and young people needing to be looked after.

Recommendations:

13. Cabinet is asked to ENDORSE the multi-agency Looked After Children Strategy.

Background Documents:

None

Contact details:

Liz Totman
Head of Corporate Parenting
Tel: 01622 694174
liz.totman@kent.gov.uk

Paul Brightwell
Performance and Quality Assurance Manager (LAC)
Tel: 01622 694308
paul.brightwell@kent.gov.uk

Kent's Looked-after Children Strategy 2011 - 2014

Improving services and outcomes
for looked after children and care leavers
through good and effective corporate parenting



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Kent and Medway



Opening statements



Our strategy to deliver good and effective corporate parenting for children and young people in our care provides a clear commitment across all agencies in Kent to

safeguard and promote the welfare of this vulnerable group.

The strategy seeks to achieve this in three ways. Firstly, it provides a means to bring together the contributions made by different parts of Kent County Council and partner agencies; each of which has a vital role in the delivery of corporate parenting for looked after children and care leavers. Secondly, the strategy reflects the importance of listening to children and young people, involving them in decision making, and understanding how the decisions that we make for them affect them personally. Lastly, the actions outlined in the strategy reflect a recognition that more needs to be done to improve the life chances of children and young people who need to be looked after, especially if they are to fulfil their educational potential.

Our looked after children deserve the best start in life. I want them to be able to look back at their time in care as having been a positive experience, full of good memories of growing up, and opportunities to develop the skills and confidence they need to succeed in life.

Paul Carter – Leader of Kent County Council



Kent's strategy for delivering good and effective corporate parenting represents the local authority and partner agencies' commitment to

improve outcomes for children and young people in need of support and care through the looked after system. It provides clear direction and focus on what needs to be done to make this happen, which is about establishing and strengthening effective relationships between professionals and staff, and with children and young people and their families.

As a corporate parent, I welcome the messages that the strategy sends out to everyone who is involved in promoting and safeguarding the welfare of looked after children and care leavers. In particular, the views of children and young people that are represented throughout the strategy demonstrate the importance we give to listening and involving them in decision making at both a personal and strategic level. This does not, however, take away the responsibility that I, other corporate parents and those delivering corporate parenting on our behalf have in doing everything possible to ensure that children and young people's experience of being looked after is a positive one that makes a real difference in their lives.

Jenny Whittle - Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services



Kent's multi-agency strategy to improve services and outcomes for looked after children is one of the ways that we are realising the

strategic vision that Kent County Council has set out in its agenda for change 'Bold Steps for Kent'. It is an absolute priority for all of us.

What I especially like about this strategy is that it focuses on the things that really matter about being a good parent. This means putting children and young people at the centre of everything that we do, and achieving more than each of us can do on our own by establishing and maintaining good relationships with children and young people, their families and between the professionals involved in their lives.

A strategy alone is not sufficient to achieve the ambitions that we have set. Everyone involved in working with looked after children and care leavers needs to understand how the things that they do in delivering corporate parenting make a difference to the lives of children and young people.

We want each of you to discuss what this strategy means for you and your teams, in the role that you contribute to promoting good and effective corporate parenting and how you can help achieve the ambitions and aspirations that we have set for our children and young people.

***Katherine Kerswell - Managing Director,
Kent County Council***



NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent and NHS West Kent, and their partners are fully committed to improving the emotional health

and wellbeing of children in care, through strong partnership working and the development of holistic services.

In order to achieve high quality services and positive outcomes for looked after children, which are also economically advantageous, it is essential that a long term strategic approach is taken and sustained.

This is a comprehensive strategy for looked after children. It endorses the development of more integrated and effective preventative services to avoid the necessity of children becoming looked after and, if they do, to reunite them with their families successfully wherever possible.

The roles and responsibilities of health and partner organisations in delivering positive outcomes to the lives of vulnerable children and young people are clearly defined in the strategy, and will underpin the service delivery in our respective organisations.

We believe that this strategy provides a strong foundation to improve the lives of looked after children and young people.

***Ann Sutton - Chief Executive NHS Kent
and Medway***

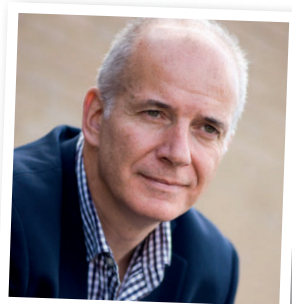


Kent's further education colleges and universities fully support Kent's Looked-after Children Strategy 2011-14.

Through the Kent and Medway Further Education and Higher Education Young Care Leaver's Strategy Group they will support the implementation of the strategy. Through the designated member scheme, they will ensure there is a positive transition to further and higher education for all young people in care or leaving care.

The colleges and universities are very supportive of the multi-agency approach to addressing the issues identified within the strategy and welcome the opportunity to help improve outcomes and life chances for these young people.

Graham Razey - Chair, Kent and Medway Further Education and Higher Young Care Leavers in Post-16 Education Strategy Group



Catch22 is proud to have been a partner of KCC in the development of services for looked after children and care leavers for more than 25 years.

The strategy demonstrates the commitment to continue sharing the responsibilities of KCC as a corporate parent and striving to improve how we carry this out. It not only sets out the task ahead of us but, in meaningful and achievable ways, describes how we'll go about making sure that the potential of young people in and leaving care

is achieved. Catch22 will embrace the aim of reducing bureaucracy, and will look to our own resources to provide opportunities for improving education, training and employability, building on the progress we've made together in the past year.

Parents will always need direction and the resources to improve. We applaud and fully support this strategy as a method to help us and young people make the most of what we have to offer and, in turn, encourage them to participate positively as citizens.

Chris Wright - Chief Executive, Catch22



Connexions Kent and Medway welcomes the implementation of Kent's Looked-after Children Strategy 2011-14. We commit to providing independent impartial advice and guidance to young people who are looked after by helping them gain the necessary confidence, skills and qualifications to maximise their potential.

The views of children and young people who are looked after are evidenced throughout the document, giving clear direction to all corporate parents and partner agencies as to how we need to behave and work to provide the best outcomes for all young people who are looked after.

We must continue to listen to and empower these young people to ensure that we all translate the words in the strategy into actions that provide every individual with positive, enriching and fulfilling experiences that enable them to maximise their life opportunities.

Positive relationships and the sharing of common objectives between agencies is the key to the success of this strategy and its ability to deliver its promises to young people. Our responsibilities as corporate parents and partner agencies are defined and we must all ensure that we meet them. Connexions Kent and Medway gives its commitment to working with all agencies in the delivery of this strategy and to continual improvement.

***Sean Kearns – Chief Executive,
Connexions Kent and Medway***

As chair of Kent's Corporate Parenting Panel, I welcome the implementation of Kent's strategy for improving services and outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.



We will continue to ensure that children and young people are fully engaged in the reviews of our progress in implementing the strategy. I look forward to seeing ongoing improvements in the services and support that Kent provides.

***Cllr Ann Allen – Chair of Kent's
Corporate Parenting Panel***

As a corporate parent, I am committed to ensuring that all looked after children and care leavers in our care are provided with services and support that they need in order to achieve the best possible start in life. I believe that this strategy points the way to how we can work together to deliver a level of corporate parenting that will make a real difference to the lives of children and young people as they grow up and achieve independence.

I am pleased that, in addition to the recognition of the role of elected members and staff in delivering corporate parenting, children and young people themselves have been able to contribute to the development of this strategy - so that it reflects what they believe makes a difference in their lives.

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Introduction

This strategy is about 'good and effective corporate parenting'. That means it's about us – the children and young people in and leaving Kent's care. It's about how we are looked after and how things can be made better for us – not just while we are in care but also afterwards. The strategy contains a lot of words we wouldn't use and some we might not understand. But that's OK because we have been asked what we think and we've had our say. What we've said is in the strategy for all to see. We really want this strategy to work, so that children's and young people's experience of being in Kent's care is a positive one and builds solid foundations for our future.

Statement made by the Kent Children in Care Council

Kent County Council and its partners are committed to providing good and effective parenting to all the children and young people it looks after. This includes all young people who are care leavers, 16 to 24 years of age and have left care following their 16th birthday.

Corporate parenting is our collective responsibility to this group of children and young people. It goes beyond our other legal obligations to all children and young people in Kent. Looked after children have a right to good and effective parenting during their time in care, which enables them to achieve their potential and enjoy the same outcomes in education and health that we would want for any other child.

This includes doing everything possible to ensure that their time in care is a happy experience and leaves them feeling cared about, as well as cared for. It is an opportunity for them to develop strong, supportive relationships that extend well in to their adult life. Being good and effective corporate parents also means having high expectations of ourselves, as well as being ambitious for our children to achieve and do their very best.

Achieving this goal requires the collective engagement of all parts of the local authority and its partners to work together to establish a firm foundation of improvements in the way that children and young people are supported to succeed. It also requires involving children and young people in the decisions being made about them, and understanding their needs from their point of view.

This strategy document sets out the key challenges and objectives that we will need to address in order to achieve this, and what we will do to make this happen.

Our strategy is contained under five headings, which reflect the key issues impacting on the lives of looked after children and care leavers:

- Working together
- Becoming effective life long learners
- Developing into successful and responsible adults
- Being emotionally, mentally and physically healthy
- Feeling safe and nurtured in a home setting.

The timescale of this strategy is from April 2011 to March 2014.

Kent's multi-agency Corporate Parenting Group, and the county council's Corporate Parenting Panel, will review the progress that we make in delivering good and effective corporate parenting.

In addition to the quarterly reporting that Kent will make to central government on our progress to deliver the improvement plan, Kent's Corporate Parenting Group will produce an annual report. Kent's Children in Care Council will be encouraged and enabled to contribute to this document.

What is good and effective corporate parenting?

Corporate parenting recognises that public agencies are accountable for discharging parental responsibilities, and that good results depend on children/young people receiving the support that they need to fulfil their potential throughout life.

Good corporate parenting is about doing what any parent should do to promote the safety and welfare of their child; keeping children at the centre of everything that we do.

Effective corporate parenting involves working across agency boundaries. It requires everyone involved in the child/young person's life working together (with minimal bureaucracy) to provide the quality of care necessary to achieve the best possible outcomes for the child/young person in all aspects of their lives, especially in relation to their education and health.

Within this strategy, the concept of corporate parenting is also separated into two roles; those who are the corporate parents and those who deliver corporate parenting.

Corporate parents are represented by elected members of the local authority and senior officers, within Kent County Council, including all the directors and other members of Kent County Council's Pioneers Group. The job descriptions of all senior officers now includes a specific reference to their role as corporate parents.

The National Children's Bureau (Hart and Williams, 2008) has distinguished three levels of corporate parents:

- › **Level 3:** Specialist responsibility - lead elected members for children/ Director of Children's Services and Managing Director
- › **Level 2:** Targeted responsibility - corporate parenting groups
- › **Level 1:** Universal responsibility - all elected members.

A good and effective corporate parent at any level should know:

- how many children are looked after by their authority
- the reasons why their children have become looked after
- the profile of their looked after children (gender, age, race, religion and disability)
- where their children and young people are looked after
- the number of placement and education moves they experience while being looked after
- how the health needs of their looked after children and care leavers are being met
- how information about looked after children and care leavers is shared between relevant services in the local authority and partner agencies
- whether the best possible care is being provided for their looked after children and care leavers. Would it be good enough for my child?
- whether the outcomes for their children have been improving year on year. Are we being ambitious enough for them?
- what is being done to improve any shortcomings in performance and outcomes
- whether the schools and education establishments that their children attend know that they are looked after, and who their carers and corporate parents are
- how many of their school-aged children

are in receipt of a good education, and how many are absent from school (for whatever reason) for a significant amount of time during the school year

- how we celebrate the achievements of looked after children and care leavers
- the living arrangements that young people move to when they leave care, and if they need further support; whether in continuing education, employment or training, and
- consider the outcomes of looked after children and care leavers when making decisions in other aspects of their work for the council.

The delivery of corporate parenting

refers to the functions undertaken by staff in the local authority, local district councils, and partner agencies (including schools and further and higher education colleges) working on behalf of the corporate parents to promote the welfare and safety of children and young people looked after by them.

A summary of the roles, responsibilities and expectations of key members of staff in the local authority and partner agencies who are involved directly in delivering corporate parenting is presented in Annex A.

The meaning of corporate parenting to children and young people:

The clarification of corporate parenting used in this strategy is helpful for professionals, who need to understand their role in the corporate parenting process. For looked after children and young people, the meaning of corporate parenting will become evident more through their experience than it will through adult explanation. It

is from the daily interactions with carers, friends and family within the placement, the dedicated and regular time with their social workers and teachers, and the way that reviews are conducted that young people's understanding of corporate parenting is formed. It is, therefore, the people who deliver corporate parenting who have the most formative role to play. This is as much about attitude as activity and arguably more about relationships than resources.

Part of our strategy for ensuring that children and young people experience a positive sense of corporate parenting will be to look at reducing bureaucracy getting in the way of the decisions taken about them. We understand that bureaucracy is necessary to promote the safety and welfare of children, but it should not lead to situations where the person making decisions is so high up the managerial ladder that they are shielded from the consequences of the decision on the child/young person's life.

In order to prevent this from happening we will:

- look at how we can delegate much of the decision making for looked after children to their carers, supported by social workers, teachers and other professionals involved in the child/young person's life
- explore how we deliver and commission services to looked after children and care leavers that minimise bureaucracy and strengthen relationships between the child and key professionals in their lives
- look at how the recommendations outlined in the Munro Review of Child Protection (DfE, May 2011) should be applied to safeguarding looked after children and care leavers.

For staff and teams whose role in promoting better outcomes for looked after children is peripheral, there will be other ways in which they can demonstrate their contribution to effective corporate parenting. For example by offering apprenticeship opportunities for looked after children and care leavers, or thinking about how services they provide could be included as a firm commitment to looked after children and care leavers in Kent's Pledge. (Annex B)

Where we are

A profile of Kent's looked-after children/care leaver population

At 30 June 2011, there were 1745 children and young people looked after by Kent County Council. Of this group of children and young people:

- 233 (13.4%) were unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- 66 (3.8%) were placed with a parent
- 93 (5.3%) were living with a relative/family friend
- 1082 (62%) were living with non-related local authority foster carers
- 87 (5%) were in a residential children's home
- 183 (10.5%) were placed outside Kent of which 31 (1.8%) were living with a relative and 20 (1.1%) were placed with KCC-registered foster carers in Medway
- 84 (4.8%) have a disability
- 270 (15.5%) have a statement of educational needs
- 65 (6.5%) of 1040 looked after children over 10 years of age have been involved in offending
- 819 (46.9%) are under 12 years of age
- 716 (41%) are girls, 1029 (59%) boys

- 356 (20.4%) belong to an ethnic minority
- The average number of placements that our looked after children experience during their time in care is 3.4 (with a range of 1 to 56 placements)
- The average length of time that a child/young person is looked after before achieving permanence or leaving care is 580 days (1.59 years)
- The main reasons that children and young people become looked after are:
 - › Abuse or neglect = 274 (26.5%)
 - › Absent parenting = 268 (25.9%)
 - › Family dysfunction = 285 (27.6%)
 - › Family in acute stress = 117 (11.3%)
 - › Parental illness or disability = 33 (3.2%)
 - › Socially unacceptable behaviour (young person) = 24 (2.3%)
 - › Child's disability = 16 (1.5%)
- Kent is also responsible for supporting 1108 care leavers:
 - › 183 (16.5%) are relevant children (aged 16 and 17 years)
 - › 925 (83.5%) are former relevant children (aged between 18 and 24 years)
- 529 (47.7%) are asylum seekers
- 476 (43%) care leavers are being supported through Kent's Social Work Practice pilot (Catch22); 8 (0.7%) through Kent's children's disability team
- 324 (29.2%) are girls, 784, (70.8%) boys.

Key issues and challenges

Current performance:

The Ofsted Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services (19 November 2010) highlighted a number of concerns about Kent's ability to deliver good and effective corporate parenting. Ofsted acknowledged that we are doing some things well and are confident in our ability to deliver the improvements necessary to meet our responsibilities as good and effective corporate parents to looked after children and care leavers.

Kent's Corporate Parenting Group (KCPG) has developed a work plan to support the implementation of Kent's improvement plan (which is now in phase 2). It sets out what actions we are taking to make the changes Ofsted have told us need to happen for our performance to improve.

Kent's rising looked after children population:

In Kent, the number of children and young people needing to be looked after (excluding unaccompanied asylum seeking children and those in short breaks) has risen by 385 since June 2008 (from 1127 to 1512 - June 2011). Most of this increase is because children and young people are being looked after for longer. This can be attributed, in part, to changes in practice introduced through the Public Law Outline (2008), which has led to the unintended consequence of delays in some court cases. The implications of the Southwark Judgement, which clarifies that homeless 16 and 17 year old young people are entitled to be looked after, has also resulted in

more young people becoming looked after following their 16th birthday.

A key part of Kent's strategy to promote better outcomes for children and young people is to ensure that they become looked after when this is the only way to promote their welfare, everything is done to ensure that they don't drift into care and that they can return home or achieve a sense of belonging and long term stability in other ways.

Kent's Placement Strategy (2011-15) sets targets and objectives do to reduce the number of children looked after through a range of service and practice initiatives, including:

- Reducing drift in care through robust care planning and ensuring that plans are implemented without delay, and that children and their families are involved in decision making
- Ensuring that, wherever possible, children and young people are enabled to return home to live with their parents, extended family or achieve permanency through adoption. We will do this by working together (including with adult services) in undertaking multi-agency assessments and providing support (especially from schools)
- Ensuring that we have an effective adolescent strategy that responds speedily to teenagers and their parents/families in crisis, giving them choice in the way that problems are resolved, and that doesn't lead to out-of-home care becoming the only resort
- We will ensure that the way that we support children on the edge of care living with family/friends provides a real alternative to the looked after system.
- Through the implementation of Kent's

preventative strategy, intervene in family problems at the earliest point to prevent escalation

- The implementation of specialist social work teams for looked after children.

New legislation and guidance:

This strategy is being implemented at a time of change, both political and in terms of major revisions to the legislation of social care, health and education that underpins our legal duties and responsibilities to looked after children and care leavers. Kent and its partners will be providing training for elected members and those responsible for delivering corporate parenting to ensure that they are familiar with the new regulations and guidance. The key objectives will be to:

- Ensure that everyone involved in corporate parenting is aware of the legislative changes to the children Act 1989 that came into force on 1 April 2011
- Make sure that there is clear guidance for everyone involved in delivering corporate parenting to help them understand how the legislative changes impact on their role, and that they know where they can receive additional guidance and advice on the regulations and how they should be implemented
- Keep children and young people at the forefront regarding how the regulations and statutory guidance are implemented
- Provide opportunities for multi-agency training
- Enable Kent's Children in Care Council, and other groups of children and young people, to contribute to the training being delivered to social workers, carers, teachers, nurses and other professionals involved in supporting them.

Looked after children placed in Kent by other authorities:

In addition to children and young people looked after by Kent County Council more than 1300 children are placed in Kent by other local authorities. Kent County Council and its partners have varying levels of responsibility to meet the needs of these children and young people, and this affects the priority that each agency will give them in their strategic implementation and operational plans. Aside from these differences, Kent County Council and its partners will work together to ensure that we:

- work with the corporate parents (the placing local authorities) of these children and young people to ensure effective communication about where children and young people are living in Kent
- let the placing authorities know the areas of Kent which have high numbers of looked after children (such as Thanet) and why additional placements would not be in children's' best interests
- are proactive in encouraging placing authorities to identify ways in which more children and young people can be enabled to remain living closer to their families, friends and local communities
- lobby the Government to ensure that the new sufficiency duty requiring local authorities to commission sufficient placements in their own area is being monitored and implemented.

How we obtain and use information:

An important element of good and effective corporate parenting is understanding and knowing what is happening to the children and young people being looked after. In Kent this means continuing improvements

in the information that all agencies obtain about looked after children and care leavers, and how we use and share this with each other. This is especially important in relation to how we use information to understand the education and health needs of our children and young people. It also means working with Kent's Children in Care Council to ensure that children and young people understand how we use personal information to promote better outcomes, and give them a greater say in how services are delivered.

offer support and advice

- *Let us have a consistent social worker that we can establish a good relationship with, and feel comfortable to talk to and tell them about our problems*
- *Let us leave care when we are ready to*
- *Help us find employment and plan for our futures*
- *Take the plans that you make for us seriously and implement them*
- *Provide us with a contract of entitlements*

What children and young people in Kent say about their experience of being looked after

In November 2009, Kent's Children in Care Council invited Kent's corporate parents to the launch of a DVD called 'Care to Listen'. It was designed and produced by some of Kent's looked-after children and care leavers to describe, from their point of view, what it is like to be looked after. The DVD is now an integral part of the training of social care, education and health staff involved in supporting the needs of looked after children and care leavers.

The key things that looked after children and care leavers want to tell us:

- *Provide us with more information about the carers we are placed with before the move*
- *Talk to us, not about us*
- *Take time to tell us what is happening, and before decisions are made*
- *Make sure we have an adult who cares about us, we trust and who is there to*

Our strategic objectives

Working together

A key objective of our strategy is to improve our corporate parenting so that we are able to work together more effectively. This requires everyone understanding their role in delivering good and effective corporate parenting, training and awareness raising in order to understand the needs of looked after children and care leavers and improve the way in which we collect, share and use information. It also recognises the need for better joint commissioning of services in those areas where different agencies have shared interests and overlapping responsibilities. This will allow us to target our limited resources more effectively.

An emphasis on working together encompassing the need to involve children and young people in decision making; in relation to how this affects them personally, and also in how they are able to have a say in the way services are provided and developed.

Our approach to engaging children and young people in decision-making rests on the following principles:

- Children and young people have views of their own, which cannot be represented by their parents or professionals
- Participation by children and young people leads to better decisions, which are more likely to be implemented effectively
- Research tells us that a failure to listen to children can have damaging consequences for their personal safety and/or the safety of others

- Involving children and young people in decision making enhances their sense of responsibility, resilience and ability to make decisions appropriately as they grow up
- Children and young people are legally entitled to be consulted when decisions are made that affect their lives. The United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child recognises that children and young people have the right that their views and opinions should be taken seriously in matters that affect them (UN Convention, 1989, Article 12).

What Kent's Children in Care Council says about working together:

- *Decisions about us should be made with us*
- *Don't tell us it's in our best interests without asking us first*
- *Give us options, rather than just your choice*
- *Give us information that we can understand*
- *Take time to explain things to us*
- *If you say to us that you are going to do something, do it - or explain to us why it hasn't been possible*
- *Turn up on time to meetings with us.*

Where we are:

In November 2010, Ofsted concluded that Kent County Council and its partners' performance in partnership working to support looked after children and care leavers was adequate overall. It included some examples of good partnership working in operational practice. This includes:

- Establishing effective partnership arrangements between the youth offending service and children's social services
- The development of multi-agency teams within Kent's virtual school (VSK).

This is also reflected in Kent's performance in enabling over 95% of looked after children to participate and share their views in their looked after review meetings.

Working together effectively, however, has been undermined by a lack of strategic focus and purpose which this document seeks to address. There is also a need to strengthen our involvement with the voluntary sector so that we are able to use their capacity more effectively to support looked after children and care leavers more effectively.

In the same report, Ofsted praised Kent County Council and partners for the way in which they established a sound platform across all agencies that encourages regular and systematic engagement of looked after children and care leavers regarding their wishes and feelings. This is reflected in the development in 2010 of Kent's fully elected Children in Care Council, and the way the county councillors with a specific remit for championing the rights of this group of children have engaged with them.

Ofsted also found evidence of good

engagement with looked after children by foster carers, independent reviewing officers and within community health services.

While we are doing some things well in the way in which we work together, we recognise that there is still much that needs to be done to reach the level of performance that we think represents effective corporate parenting. The steps we will need to undertake in order to achieve this are outlined in the next two sections.

What we will do:

- Develop a contract of entitlement for looked after children and care leavers
- Encourage children and young people to contribute to the design and development of services for them by strengthening Kent's Children in Care Council's ability to represent their views and interests
- This will include increasing the numbers of children and young people involved with the children in care council, and the way in which the CICC tells children and young people about the work it is doing on their behalf
- Make sure that everyone involved in promoting the safety and welfare of looked after children and care leavers understands other people's roles in delivering good and effective corporate parenting and the importance of working together
- Ensure that all children and young people looked after and in the process of leaving care know how to make a complaint if they are unhappy with any aspect of the service they have received or are receiving, and ensure that they are supported in doing this
- Look at ways in which we can use the

experiences of young people leaving care to improve services

- Develop more sophisticated ways of using and sharing information.

about their views and opinions before any decisions are made that affect them. We will also explain the reasons for a decision when this does not reflect the child/young person's wishes and feelings.

How we will get there:

1. We will increase the number of young people who can contribute their views about the services and support they receive, through:
 - › Strengthening arrangements to support the Children in Care Council by increasing the number of apprenticeship posts involved in co-ordinating the running of the CICC from 1 to 2
 - › Increasing the number elected to Kent's Children in Care Council from 12 to 24
 - › Promoting area Children in Care Councils as well as a central Children in Care Council
 - › Ensuring that the Children in Care Council reflects the views and opinions of disabled children and minority groups
 - › Raising awareness of Kent's Pledge among children and young people.
2. The recruitment of all staff who have a key role in delivering looked after and care leaving services will involve a panel of young people
3. We will continue to involve looked after children and young people in delivering training to social workers, carers, teachers, nurses, Youth Offending Service workers, elected members and other key staff involved in delivering services and support for them
4. We will ensure that (appropriate to their age and understanding) looked after children and care leavers are consulted

Becoming effective life-long learners

A good education is essential in order to become successful and healthy throughout life. We want our children to do well in school and in any further and higher education that they choose to undertake. Most importantly, we want them to achieve their very best in everything that they do. We also want to ignite in them a passion for learning that remains with them as they move into adulthood and independence, so that they are able to respond and adapt effectively to the challenges that they will face in the future.

Some looked after children do very well at school, but they often face additional barriers to success in their education. This includes missing substantial periods of their education, which can occur for different reasons, such as delay in being given a school place; poor health; being excluded from school; placement changes making it harder to get to school; being placed in the wrong school for them; and truanting.

Having at least one adult in their life who acts as a good role model, encourages them to attend school and supports them in their reading and doing their homework is as important for every school-aged looked after child as being provided with a good school.

Our strategy will focus on addressing the imbalances that children and care leavers face so that they can achieve their very best.

What Kent's Children in Care Council say about education:

- *Sometimes other things in our lives get in the way of our education*
- *Help us catch up when we need to*
- *Schools should be safer places*
- *Take bullying seriously*
- *Don't make us stand out in school as different from the other students*
- *We need adults who take a real interest in what we do at school – not just in the classroom but in sports, acting, music and other stuff*
- *Exams aren't everything. Some of us shine in other ways.*

Where we are:

In November 2010, Ofsted concluded that KCC and its partners performance in helping looked after children and young people to enjoy and achieve was inadequate; especially in relation to promoting better educational outcomes.

While a headteacher had been appointed in September 2010 to run Kent's Virtual School for looked after children, this initiative had not been in place long enough to have any impact on raising the educational performance of looked after children.

Despite the work undertaken by individuals, partnership working was not as effective as it needed to be to increase standards and raise the aspirations of our looked after children and young people. Together with poor overall achievement in terms of school attendance, exclusions and education performance in Key Stage SATs we recognise that Ofsted had no choice but to rate KCC and its partners performance in this area as 'inadequate'.

This is reflected in Kent County Council's performance on a number of indicators used by the government to establish how well local authorities are promoting the education of looked after children.

Kent's performance on these indicators for 2010/11 is outlined below:

- NI99 - 46% - 1% above national average for looked after children (L4+ Maths KS2)
- N1100 - 45% - 1% above national average for looked after children (L4+ English KS2)
- N1101 - 10.4% - 1.46% below national average for looked after children (5A*-C inc. EandM KS4)
- CF/C24 - 12% - 0.5% above national average for looked after children (25+ days absence)
- 150% above the national average for looked after children permanent exclusions at 1%.

We recognise that a test of KCC and it's partners ability to deliver good and effective corporate parenting is how well everyone communicates and works together to promote better educational outcomes for this group of children and young people. The virtual school for looked after children and care leavers has led to a service, with a clearer vision and identity and giving direction and leadership for the whole of Kent, with respect to the importance of education and raising expectations for educational achievements of looked after children and care leavers.

What we will do:

- Build capacity in schools and other educational settings

- Ensure that personal education plans (PEPs) are based on a comprehensive and integrated assessment of the child/ young person's needs which identifies any learning difficulties and puts in place appropriate help for them
- For young people in post-16 education, working in partnership with sixth forms colleges and training providers, continue to provide personal education plans
- Robustly track and monitor looked after children's performance and outcomes
- Ensure all looked after children have timely access to high quality support and intervention
- Improve attendance of looked after children
- Promote the role of the designated member of staff (further and higher education) for looked after children in Kent's further education colleges and universities.

How we will get there:

1. A targeted local authority response to promote better educational outcomes of looked after children and care leavers through:
 - Ensuring all services work closely and efficiently to provide timely high quality support
 - Schools to receive a menu of continuing professional development opportunities along with high quality information, advice and guidance
 - Sharing best practice through direct working opportunities and the Virtual School Kent website
2. Develop a portfolio of learning needs assessments in partnership with Kent education psychology service. Develop best practice and model initial personal education plan process built on effective assessment of learning needs

3. Secure, robust and functional management information system that is fit for purpose for a range of professionals working with looked after children. A system with up-to-date, accurate education, health and social indicators to regularly track and monitor to ensure effective planning and use of resources
 4. Develop a locality based delivery model, building a team around the child and which will reduce the staff to looked after children from 1:750 (July 2010) to best-practice ratios of 1:30-50
 5. Develop best-practice model with attendance and behaviour service, including a robust service level agreement with the education welfare service. In addition, develop the Kent Looked After Children Exclusion Strategy to include closer working with schools, colleges, academies, pupil referral units and alternative curriculum placements and reduce exclusions by offering support officers in the school from the virtual school Kent.
- 33% by the end of the academic year 2011/12
 - Narrow the gap in attainment (measured by the percentage of young people achieving 5 A*-C at GCSE including English and maths) between looked after children and their peers to no more than 36% by the end of the academic year 2011/12
 - Reduce the percentage of looked after children who miss 25 days or more days of schooling during the academic year to no more than 11%.

These five actions will ensure that the educational attainment of looked after children achieves or exceeds the following targets that the Secretary of State has asked KCC and its partners to achieve:

- Narrow the gap in attainment (measured by the percentage of young people achieving level 4 in English at the end of Key Stage 2) between looked after children and their peers to no more than 34% by the end of the academic year 2011/12
- Narrow the gap in attainment (measured by the percentage of young people achieving level 4 in maths at the end of Key Stage 2) between looked after children and their peers to no more than

Developing into successful and responsible adults

We also know from our experience supporting young people through the process of leaving care that many do go on to achieve success in their lives, and they value continuing support during early adulthood from their corporate parents. It is widely accepted that without good and effective corporate parenting during their transition into adulthood and independence, care leavers are vulnerable to becoming needy, disenfranchised and alienated adults; increasing their likelihood of mental health problems in adult life, going to prison, unemployment, and being homeless.

What Kents' Children in Care Council say about leaving care:

- *Don't underestimate how scary leaving care is for us*
- *Most young people in the country don't leave home until their mid-20s and can still rely on parental support after that. What about us? Where can we turn for help when we've left care?*
- *Have a range of decent accommodation with different levels of support to fit our needs and capabilities*
- *Don't rush us into independence. Work with us until we are ready*
- *Don't judge us by our mistakes. You were 21 once!*

Where we are:

During Ofsted's inspection of Kent County Council in 2010, the quality of support provided to young people who were looked after or in the transition of moving into adult independence as care leavers was praised by the inspectors. Ofsted noted that Kent's 16 plus service, one of four phase 1 social work practice pilots, was spoken about positively by young people for raising ambition and aspiration and making a positive difference in their lives, including opportunities for ongoing education, training and employment.

Kent County Council and its partners are also seen to have responded well to providing services for unaccompanied asylum seekers, all of whom are looked after and/or eligible for leaving care services by virtue of the Hillingdon Court Judgment (2003). Services were seen as providing good support in relation to access to education and effective advice on housing, and for providing two dedicated independent reviewing officer posts. Kent's service for unaccompanied asylum seekers was also recognised for the way it provides information about services, rights and entitlements to unaccompanied asylum seekers in different languages and helping young people learn to speak and understand English. It was noted, however, that more work is needed on providing quick and easy access to legal advice.

With respect to disabled children, while they are considered to receive an overall good service, Ofsted has noted that those who do not meet the threshold for adult services continue to give cause for concern. Kent County Council and its partners have also been responsive to ensuring that the needs of homeless 16 and 17

year olds are being met. Kent is one of the first local authorities to establish clear protocols between local authority children and young people's services and local housing authorities regarding how the needs of these young people will be met, in accordance with section 20 (CA 89) and the Southwark Court Judgment (2009).

Kent County Council and its partners performance in relation to a range of relevant indicators that it reports to government each year was (2010/11):

- N1147: Care leavers in suitable accommodation = 82% approx (94% excluding unaccompanied asylum seekers who have gone missing due to their immigration status)
- N1148: Care leavers in education, training or employment at 19 years = 60%

Kent County Council and its partners are moving in the right direction to help young people develop into successful and responsible adults. Nevertheless, there are still areas in our delivery of corporate parenting that we need to improve. This includes more focus on helping young people who have become disengaged from education, and providing more apprenticeship opportunities for older looked after children and care leavers to help them develop the skills they need to be successful in work.

While nearly all of our looked after children and care leavers aged 16 years or more have an up-to-date pathway plan, more work is required to improve the quality of these plans, so that they are achievable. We know from listening to young people that many feel that not enough is being done to ensure that their pathway plans are implemented properly.

More work also needs to be done to improve the support provided to looked after children and care leavers who are experiencing emotional and mental health problems. This includes extending accessibility to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to all young people up to their 18th birthday instead of having to access adult mental health services.

The actions being taken to improve accessibility of child and adolescent mental health services for looked after children and care leavers are detailed under the strategic objective - 'Being emotionally, mentally and physically healthy' (see page 25).

What we will do:

- Ensure that every young person in the process of leaving care has a good pathway plan, based on a thorough assessment of their needs, and which is implemented to time
- Ensure that our care leavers are able to live in suitable accommodation in good quality surroundings that leaves them feeling safe and secure
- Support our care leavers to know what support (financial and practical) is open to them and how they can obtain it
- Provide specific help to young people leaving care in obtaining employment or training or in pursuing further education
- Support care leavers who want and are able to go into higher education.

How we will get there:

1. Review, with our young people, the design and content of the current pathway plan to ensure that it is delivering good and effective corporate parenting

2. Work with the health services to improve accessibility and impact of child and adult mental health services for 16 and 17 year olds
3. Work with district housing authorities, social housing associations and other key partners in the voluntary sector to increase the range of accommodation provision for young parents, offenders and those with a learning disability. This includes recruiting and training more supported accommodation providers across the county
4. Develop with staff, the children in care council, and other young people, the implementation of the 'pathway to independence training pack' and a range of other training opportunities in respect of social skills development
5. Continue to develop a range of employment, education and training opportunities, that reflect the aspirations and needs of looked after children and care leavers. They will have those needs represented on all employment, education and training strategic groups
6. We will identify apprenticeship opportunities within Kent County Council and encourage voluntary agencies we commission services from to provide apprenticeships for our looked after children and care leavers in order to ensure we can guarantee an opportunity for all our looked after children to apply for an apprenticeship.

Being emotionally, mentally and physically healthy

Helping looked after children to acquire good physical, mental and emotional health is a fundamental component of positive health and wellbeing and an essential pre-condition to successful learning, happiness, and success in life. Looked after children and care leavers are more likely to experience poor physical and mental health. Many looked after children come into care with chronic physical and mental health problems that have not been spotted due to neglect.

There is a risk that the experience of being looked after can exacerbate these difficulties if they are not dealt with promptly, and services and support to address them are delayed. Being looked after can also generate other stresses in the child and young person's life that create new health problems for them, especially in relation to emotional and mental health, which can get in the way of them achieving their best.

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (October, 2010) outlines the following principles and values for promoting the quality of life for looked after children:

- Put the voices of children, young people and their families at the heart of service design and delivery
- Deliver services that are tailored to the individual and diverse needs of children and young people by ensuring effective joint commissioning and integrated professional working
- Develop services that address health and wellbeing and promote high quality care
- Encourage warm and caring relationships between child and carer that nurture attachment and create a sense of belonging so that the child or young person feels safe, valued and protected
- Help children and young people to develop a strong sense of personal identity and maintain the cultural and religious beliefs they choose
- Ensure young people are prepared for and supported in their transition to adulthood
- Support the child or young person to participate in the wider network of peer, school and community activities to help build resilience and a sense of belonging
- Ensure children and young people have a stable experience of education that encourages high aspiration and supports them in achieving their potential.

What Kent's Children in Care Council say:

- *Treat us with respect and remember that the stuff you want us to talk about can be really private and personal*
- *Too many changes in our lives does our heads in. Sometimes, it feels like 'pass the parcel'*
- *Don't make us go to medicals*
- *Getting the right help when we need it can take too long*
- *Sometimes you seem more worried about teeth than the really heavy stuff*
- *We need to be able to speak with people who will listen, understand and help.*

Where we are:

Ofsted in 2010 highlighted the need for Kent County Council and its partners in primary care and hospital trusts to improve the way in which services, such as initial health assessments, and ongoing health reviews, were being delivered.

The percentage of Kent's looked after children who receive an annual health assessment each year (82.5% in 2009/10) has remained below the national average of 85.6%.

The average time a child waits to receive an initial health assessment in Kent is around three months. This should be undertaken within 20 working days of a child/young person becoming looked after.

We need to do much more to improve the support that looked after children who are experiencing emotional and mental health problems, receive from us. While not all looked after children will need specialist support, the child and adolescent mental health services needs to become much more effective and consistent in its ability to meet their needs.

We also need to do more to ensure that looked after children are properly screened to identify those with a substance misuse problem.

What we will do:

- Ensure that all looked after children get access to annual health reviews and an initial health assessment within 20 working days of being looked after
- Achieve by March 2012 the target set by the Secretary of State that the

percentage of looked after children having health and dental checks increases to at least the England average of 85% and to at least maintain this during 2012/13

- Make sure that every looked after child has a health plan based on a thorough integrated assessment of their needs
- The local authority and NHS Kent and Medway have collaborated to redesign child and adolescent mental health services for looked after children. This includes the child and adolescent mental health services for looked after children and also specialist child and adolescent mental health services
- Ensure that looked after children and care leavers get an opportunity to take part in consultations about health delivery
- Become more effective at monitoring health outcomes for looked after children and care leavers, and using this information in strategic planning
- Encourage looked after children and care leavers to take age-appropriate responsibility for their own health care.

How we will get there:

1. The primary care trust and the local authority will work with providers to meet statutory timescales for health assessments, and to improve the quality of health assessments in line with national requirements
2. All health assessments will consider, as appropriate, health promotion such as substance misuse, sexual health and smoking
3. Approval has been given to re-procure services which provide early intervention across Kent, including consultation with professionals working with looked

after children. Approval has been given to re-procure community child and adolescent mental health services to prioritise looked after children and provide services to meet their needs. Procurement started in September 2011, and the new service will start in September 2012. Until then, current services will ensure that looked after children receive the most appropriate service

4. In order to provide a more integrated and consistent service for young people in Kent, a community child and adolescent mental health services model for the delivery of specialist and targeted mental health services is being developed and will be introduced in April 2012.

Feeling safe and nurtured in a home setting

Good and effective corporate parenting ensures looked after children maintain their safety and also promotes the kinds of risk taking associated with increased self esteem and happy memories of childhood.

All children need to be kept safe from the risks they might face whilst growing up, which have become increasingly complex through modern technology, such as mobile phones and the internet. Many looked after children have missed out on parental guidance on personal safety before coming into care, which can leave them especially vulnerable.

Being looked after should provide a nurturing environment for children and young people to grow up in. It should be a time that they can look back to with happy memories.

Growing up in a stable, supportive and nurturing family, where children and young people feel secure, is one of the most important factors in helping them to achieve this. It increases their stability and security, their resilience to cope with adversity, and helps them to establish healthy relationships with other people.

We want all our looked after children and care leavers to feel safe and secure, and to experience as strong a sense of belonging as possible. We will ensure that all looked after children and care leavers have at least one adult they can turn to in times of need.

What Kent's Children in Care Council say:

- *It's difficult to feel secure when you are moved from place to place*
- *Listen to what we say about staying put and moving on*
- *It can be difficult to adjust to a new placement when it is so different from the one before*
- *My room's untidy, I'm late down for breakfast, and I don't say much. What's the problem? I'm a teenager - Get over it!*
- *Social workers don't have caseloads. They have individual young people who need support.*
- *We need people who are going to be there for us long term.*

Where we are:

While Ofsted rated Kent County Council's performance in promoting outcomes for looked after children as inadequate, they did form a view that the authority was performing adequately with respects to keeping it's looked after children safe and Kent's children were, on the whole, being seen regularly by a social worker.

In 2010/11 Children's Social Services revised its guidance for social workers and other staff regarding the promotion of permanency for children and young people.

Kent's fostering service has consistently received a good rating from government inspectors, and now has 700 foster carers, enabling the majority of Kent County Council's looked-after children to live in a family setting with over 80% in foster care.

Effective protocols have also been in

place since 2007 between children's social services and Kent County Council's youth offending service, which help to ensure good partnership working between the two services so that staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

Kent County Council's homelessness protocols for older looked after children and care leavers was introduced in 2010 in response to the Southwark Court Judgement (2009), and is a good example of partnership working between the local authority and district council housing authorities.

There is still much to achieve in order for Kent County Council and it's partners and to become a good and effective corporate parent. This includes a focus on improving the following:

- The level of support provided to children and young people who need to be placed long distances from home, ensuring that wherever possible children remain living close to their family, friends and communities
- The frequency of visits made to looked after children, ensuring that social workers meet the new regulations regarding visiting frequency to looked after children in different placement types from April 2011
- Aligning Kent's missing-from-care and missing-from-education safeguarding processes
- Reductions in the number of children being excluded from school (see also section on 'Becoming effective lifelong learners')
- Placement stability
- A focus on promoting permanence; ensuring that all looked after children have a strong sense of stability and belonging where they live.

What we will do:

- Ensure that 'permanency' is at the heart of all decisions made regarding children and young people
- Meet the target issued by the Secretary of State to improve the percentage of children adopted to 11% by March 2012 and to 13% over the period 2012/13
- Increase the stability of placements for all looked after children by increasing placement choice, and reducing the number of children who live a long distance from their family and friends. This includes reducing the number of children or young people placed in Thanet and other areas of Kent experiencing high levels of deprivation
- Ensure that every looked after child has an up-to-date care plan that addresses their placement needs, education, health, day-to-day arrangements for care, permanency and planning for independence/adulthood (where appropriate)
- Implement the recommendations from the Independent Review of Kent County Council's adoption service
- Make sure that adults who work with disabled children and unaccompanied asylum seeking children or young people have the skills and tools to communicate effectively
- Maintain good record keeping of children's case files to ensure effective decision making with respect to children's welfare and safety
- Help looked after children and care leavers understand their past and the reason why they looked after through direct work, such as life story work, revisited at key stages as they grow up.

How we will get there:

From April 2011:

1. Implement Kent County Council's revised permanence policy, including strengthening the sense of permanence and belonging for looked after children in long term care through the role of permanence panels
2. Look at ways to improve the stability of social workers allocated to looked after children, and ensure that the frequency of visits being made to looked after children are at least the minimum statutory requirement
3. Ensure that all social workers and foster carers are working to the Fostering National Minimum Standards (2011)
4. In response to what children and young people have told us about their experiences of coming in to care (see page 14) make sure that all carers have a family profile which will be shared with children and young people before they are placed
5. Continue to involve young people in the selection of foster carers
6. Provide training and support to all carers, children and young people about e-safety.

Taking the strategy forward

Kent's Corporate Parenting Group will work in partnership with the Corporate Parenting Panel, and with Kent's Children in Care Council, and other key boards, such as the Kent and Medway Further Education and Higher Education Strategy Group for the educational support of young care leavers. This partnership will provide the strategic leadership to ensure that all agencies involved in corporate parenting understand

their part in delivering and achieving the objectives in the time required.

The implementation of the strategy is supported in four ways:

- Through Kent's Pledge to looked after children and care leavers (Annex A)
- Kent's looked after children Work Plan (Annex B)
- The development of a strategic implementation/operational plan by each agency/service delivering corporate parenting
- Regular monitoring of the strategy, including quarterly reporting each year to Kent County Council's improvement board and Cabinet.

application of G) (FC) (Appellant) v London Borough of Southwark (Respondents).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. (1989). Article 12:

"Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child..."

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Department for Education. (2011). The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report – A child centred system.

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Annex A:

Roles and responsibilities of professionals working with looked after children and care leavers to deliver corporate parenting

Social workers

The role of the social worker is to promote the welfare and safety of looked after children and care leavers through the provision of services to provide support and using various legal powers to reinforce the norms and values of society in respect of how children should be brought up.

Given the statutory nature of what social workers do, they often take on the role of 'lead professional' to protect and promote the welfare of vulnerable children, including those children who are looked after. The lead professional role is reinforced in the Children Act 2004. It is also a statutory requirement that every looked after child is allocated a social worker, who must be registered with the General Social Care Council.

Social workers take a variety of approaches, including the application of assessment, therapeutic and direct work with children/young people and their families, providing information and advice, mobilising resources, and working in partnership with other agencies.

Social workers have a number of specific responsibilities for looked after children:

- A primary responsibility is to ensure that every looked after child has a care plan, based upon an up-to-date assessment of the child's needs. The care plan includes a focus on the education, health, and placement needs of the child, and must also set out the day-to-day arrangements for how looked after children are to be cared for. For children looked after for more than four months, their care plan must also set out how permanence will be achieved. This may be rehabilitation home, adoption, or where permanence outside of the looked after children system is not possible, how the child can establish a strong sense of stability and belonging while they are looked after. The care plans for young people looked after from their 16th birthday must also include a pathway plan, which sets out how their transition to adulthood will be achieved
- Social workers also fulfil the statutory duty placed on local authorities to ensure that every looked after child is visited within minimum intervals. This can be anything from weekly to every three months, depending on their needs and the stability of their placement. Children and young people have a right to request a visit from their social worker between intervals, which social workers must respond to wherever possible. Some visits to looked after children must take place at their placement, with their carers but they also must have an opportunity to speak with their social worker on their own. The safeguarding function of social workers also means that some visits to the child/young person in their placement should be unannounced
- Social workers are also responsible for ensuring that every looked after child has a statutory review meeting, which must occur at set intervals. These are within the first 28 days of the child becoming

looked after, then three months later, followed by intervals of no more than every six months thereafter

- For care leavers, the statutory review meeting is replaced with a review of their pathway plan, which must be at intervals no more than six months
- Social workers are required to work closely with the designated teacher in the child's school to ensure that an effective personal education plan is in place, which is drawn up with the child, parents, carers, and other relevant people - and updated at least six monthly
- Social workers should also be supportive to the child's carers, and maintain regular contact with the child's school in order to monitor progress.

Foster carers

Foster carers provide a safe environment for children where they can experience as full a family life as possible. Carers can make everyday decisions as they would their own child, and without the child feeling that they 'stand out' as a looked after child (Foster Carers Charter DfE 2011). The fostering task is set out in Volume 4 of the Children Act 1989 Regulations and Guidance which emphasises that foster carers should:

- Make children feel welcomed into the foster home, treated and valued as a member of the family, and included in the everyday life of the family
- Subject to the child's care plan, help to promote, support and encourage children to maintain positive and constructive contact with their parents and wider family, friends and others who are important to them
- Model respect for the children they care for, and provide them with private space for their belongings, to do homework, see friends and family, manage personal issues and feel safe
- Give the child information, appropriate explanations and choices about what happens in line with their care plan
- In close partnership with the child's social worker and the fostering social worker, give individual personal support to the child in view of their gender, faith, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, sexual orientation and any disability they may have
- With support from the fostering service, health professionals and the child's social worker, be responsible for the day to day health of children placed with them. For children receiving short break care, responsibility for health care remains with the parents, but foster carers will be responsible for maintaining ongoing health treatment during the short break, and for emergency treatment
- Protect children from harm, including abuse, accidents, bullying or negative attitudes. They should be able to recognise and deal with any indications or incidents of bullying, act proactively and intervene positively, engaging with those bullying as well as those being bullied
- Promote positive behaviour by responding positively to each child or young person's individual behaviour and to be skilled at both diffusing difficult situations and avoiding situations escalating
- Understand that supporting looked after children to attend school regularly and succeed in education are primary tasks. This includes helping the child with their homework and attending parent meetings where appropriate. They should work with the responsible authority to ensure that arrangements are in place

for monitoring school attendance and educational progress and achievement. They should enable children to take part in activities such as sports, children's clubs, drama groups, etc

- Give children and young people age appropriate opportunities to learn the skills they need to develop self-esteem and a positive sense of personal identity, and be prepared for adult life.

Fostering social workers

The fostering social worker assesses prospective foster carers, and provides social work support, information and advice to carers to enable them to provide consistent, high quality care to the child. (The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011; The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulation volume 4: Fostering Services; Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards).

The fostering social worker:

- assists in dealing with relevant services, such as health and education
- supports foster carers to help individual children and young people cope if they are subject to discrimination, marginalisation or ridicule from their peers by virtue of their gender, religion, ethnic origin, cultural background, linguistic background, nationality, disability, sexual orientation or looked after status
- identifies, as part of the approval process for carers, any individuals who may play a significant role in providing support for these carers in their role
- facilitates an appropriate match between the child and the carer, where the placement can reasonably be expected to meet the child's needs
- ensures information on carers is provided to the child, in partnership with the child's social worker, before placement
- supports the child's social worker in drawing up the placement plan for the child
- in considering whether a relative, friend or other connected person should be approved as a foster carer, take account of the needs of the child who would be placed with them and the capacity of the carer to meet those particular needs
- oversees the support received by the carer
- supports the foster carer, particularly where children display very challenging behaviour, and aid understanding of how children's previous experiences can manifest in challenging behaviour
- supervises the foster carer, ensuring that they are meeting the child's needs and offer support and a framework to assess the carer's performance and develop their skills
- ensures the foster carer records, and helps children record (subject to age and understanding), significant life events, including photographs and other memorabilia of their time in placement
- makes regular visits to the foster carer, including at least one unannounced visit a year, to ensure that the home continues to meet the needs of looked after children
- supports carers where young people are approaching adulthood
- provides a written report of the annual review of the foster carer
- ensures that the foster carer evidences attainment of the Children's Workforce Development Council standards within 12 months of approval
- provides comprehensive information about the policies and procedures of the fostering service, including those relating

to the handling of allegations, and about the support which will be offered.

The county adoption service

The county adoption service is a social work service which works with children's districts to identify permanent placements for looked after children through adoption. The service recruits, assesses and supports prospective adopters and it supports the children, their birth families and their adoptive families before the adoption order is made and afterwards.

Residential care workers

These people work in different settings, including children's homes, residential schools, and secure residential units. Residential care workers are responsible for providing primary care to children and young people living in the residential home. It is usual that each child/young person living in the home is allocated one particular residential care worker who will act as their 'keyworker'. This person takes a particular interest in the child's life, working with his/her social worker and other professionals, and attending meetings concerning them such as reviews. There is expected to be good liaison between the residential care/key worker and the designated teacher; through care workers attending school meetings, parents evenings and looked after children reviews.

Like foster carers, residential care workers are responsible for supporting children in their educational achievement, both through activities within the home and engaging with their schools and successfully promoting attendance. Residential staff have a responsibility to act as an advocate for, or

on behalf of, a looked after child who maybe experiencing difficulties. If, for example, children are excluded or not on a school roll then they must work closely with the child's social worker and the responsible authority so that the child is properly supported and enabled to resume full time education as soon as possible.

Residential children's homes must also ensure that children/young people have dedicated spaces where they can complete homework and undertake private study without being distracted by what else is going on in the home. Residential care workers also need to know their responsibilities in terms of whether they are authorised to give medical consent and sign permission slips for schools trips and activities. These delegations must be outlined in the child placement plan, which should be in place within 10 working days of a child/young person being placed in the residential home.

The roles and responsibilities of children's homes are laid out in the National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes (revised April 2011), and the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 (revised 2011).

Independent reviewing officers

This role was introduced by statute in 2004. Their primary focus is to quality assure the care planning and review process for each looked after child, and ensure that their wishes and feelings are given full consideration.

The statutory duties of the independent reviewing officer are outlined under section 25B (1), of the Children Act 1989, and in the Independent Reviewing Officer Handbook, which is part of the Children Act 1989

amendments in Volume 2 Care Planning, Placement, and Case Review Regulations and Statutory Guidance (2010).

The statutory duties of the independent reviewing officer are:

- Monitor the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to the child's case
- Participate in any review of the child's case
- Ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority
- Perform any other function which is prescribed in regulations

The key responsibilities of the independent reviewing officer are:

- Promote the voice of the child
- Ensure that plans for looked after children are based on detailed and informed assessments, are up to date, effective and provide a real and genuine response to each child's needs
- Make sure that the child understands their rights to make a complaint and to access an advocate if they need help in expressing their views
- Offer safeguards to prevent drift in care planning and delivery of services
- Monitor the activity of the local authority as a corporate parent in ensuring that the child's wishes and feelings are given proper consideration and weight and that the child fully understands the implications of any changes to his/her care plan

Youth Offending Service workers

The principal aim of the youth justice system is to prevent offending by children and young people. The Youth Offending Service is a multi-agency partnership of representatives from specialist children's services, health, education, police, and probation.

The Youth Offending Service is responsible for:

- Assessing children and young people either seen as being at risk of offending or having been identified as involved in offending behaviour - the key themes relating to the assessment are:
 - The likelihood of offending/re-offending
 - The degree of risk of serious harm they may present to others (the public protection role of the service)
 - Any need they may have for their welfare to be safeguarded.
- Providing reports for Youth Offender Panels (referral orders) and, when requested, for the Courts to advise on the sentencing of children and young people
- Preparing intervention plans in partnership with the child/young person, parents/carers and other agencies. This includes the Secure Estate when children/young people are in custody, whose provision is relevant to the factors associated with each child/young person's offending and those most likely to assist their desistance from further offending. With respect to looked after children:
 - › the Youth Offending Service intervention plan should be integral

- to the care plan/pathway plan and should be supportive of the latter
- › the Specialist Children's Services social worker/16+ worker and the foster carers for the looked after child should be involved in the planning.
- Co-ordinating the provision of services (e.g. education, child and adolescent mental health services, substance misuse) in line with the objectives of the intervention plan. The Youth Offending Service worker, when the child/young person is 'looked after' will work with the lead professional, i.e. the social worker or the 16+ worker, to ensure an effective joint approach to the achievement of the agreed objectives
- The delivery of offending behaviour programmes designed to assist the child/young person to understand the reasons for their offending and to provide them with the skills and motivation to desist from further offending
- Maintaining a level of contact with the child/young person which is proportionate to the assessed risk of them re-offending/ causing serious harm to others/both. This will include making home visits and where a looked after child is in a placement engaging those responsible for their care in these visits as it is intended their relationship with the looked after child will enable their support to be complementary to the work of the Youth Offending Service case manager
- Ensuring the child/young person complies with the requirements of their sentence and of their intervention plan and, where they do not, instigating enforcement action via returning them to court
- Keeping the progress of the child/young person towards the objectives of their intervention plan under review and

contributing to other reviews relating to their status and, if they are a looked after child, establishing an exit strategy as the statutory intervention comes to an end.

Schools

Identify a member of staff as the designated teacher to act as a resource and advocate for looked after pupils, responsible for monitoring and promoting their progress (including attendance) ensuring personal education plans are in place and are regularly reviewed, and ensuring information regarding individual looked after pupils is shared with other professionals, as appropriate.

Inform parents and foster carers and intervene to address any attendance problems.

Should only use exclusion as a last resort and always within the legal guidelines.

Listen to their looked after children to find out if there are any issues getting in the way of them doing well at school, such as why they may not be attending school regularly (e.g. bullying, problems with learning, anxiety).

Have high expectations for looked after children as for all pupils. Put pastoral support in place for pupils at risk of disaffection, documented within a pastoral support plan.

Respect looked after children's privacy by ensuring that only those who need to know about the child/young person's circumstances are informed, particularly in relation to maintaining confidentiality about the child's looked after status.

Work in partnership with agencies such as

social services and health to promote the welfare of looked after children.

Designated doctors and nurses for looked after children

The designated doctor and nurse role are senior positions in the health service to assist the primary care trust in fulfilling their responsibilities as commissioner of services to improve the health of looked after children. The designated role is intended to be a strategic one, separate from any responsibilities for individual children or young people who are looked after, although the professionals may also provide a direct service to children and young people, and provide advice and support to other health professionals who work with looked after children, such as doctors, nurses and health visitors.

Working closely together designated doctors and nurses fulfil the following functions:

- Advisory role – providing strategic and expert advice to the primary care children's trusts, and other professionals on health issues concerning looked after children and young people
- Quality assurance/performance management - ensuring that sufficient information is available to determine the quality of health assessments, plans and services provided to looked after children
- Policy and procedures – making sure that health and other professionals working closely with them are clear about what is expected of them in order to deliver good and effective practice
- An annual report on the health of looked after children – presented to

the chief executive of the primary care trust, focussing on the effectiveness of health care planning for looked after children, progress in meeting national and local targets, and accessibility of health services including child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHs) for looked after children and young people.

- Training – contribute to the planning and delivery of training for health professionals working with looked after children and young people.

Health visiting service

The health visiting service is a service for all children under the age of five years old or until they first attend school, and their families. The Health Visitor Implementation Plan 2011-2015 – A Call to Action published on 8th February 2011 sets out the framework for the development of the government's vision to increase the numbers of health visitors by 4,200 FTE (full time equivalent) nationally and describes the new health visiting model as follows:

- **Community** - Based on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment the service will understand the needs of local communities creating a directory of services to meet those needs. Health visiting professionals in the local area are to be supported in community development work undertaking the new 'building community capacity' training module
- **Universal** - All elements of the Healthy Child Programme 'Pregnancy and the First Five Years of Life' are to be delivered using evidence – based on universal prevention. Health visitors will lead the delivery of the core universal contacts through integrated children's services

while directly delivering those areas specific to health visiting prioritising first time and vulnerable parents. Every family will be offered 'a programme of screening tests, immunisations, developmental reviews and information and guidance to support parenting and healthy choices'² in line with the requirements of the Healthy Child Programme. The 'progressive universalism' approach will be based on a holistic and robust health needs assessment incorporating medical (physical and emotional), social, environmental and relationship elements

- **Universal plus** - The health visiting service will undertake specific areas of each progressive part of the programme where clearly it is the role of the health visiting service to do so using clearly defined evidence based care packages. Where the progressive elements of the programme relate to other disciplines or agencies the health visiting service will make timely referrals to or sign post on to other disciplines/agencies providing a flexible and seamless approach
- **Universal partnership plus** - as a minimum the health visitor service will ensure that there is a named health visitor on the management board of every local Sure Start Children's Centre and there are services/drop-in sessions provided by health visitors through the centre. The health visiting service actively participates in the Common Assessment Framework process.

School nursing service

The school nursing service is for all children aged four to 19 years, and up to the age of 25 years for those who have complex health needs. School nursing teams include Registered Specialist Community Public Health Nurses – School Nursing, Registered Nurses, Registered Paediatric Nurses, Qualified Nursery Nurses and experienced secretarial, clerical and administrative support. The school nursing service provides a child-and-family-centred, public health based service to local communities in partnership with other organisations. Determination of need is based on a holistic and robust health assessment which incorporates a review of health (physical, emotional and developmental) needs, immunisation status, access to primary and dental care, and social, environmental and relationship elements. Reviews are undertaken at key stages such as school transition in year six/seven as set out in the Healthy Child Programme or as determined by changes in collaboration with other members of the school health team and wider Healthy Child Programme team. Each child and their family will thereby receive support that is appropriate for their needs as determined by the health assessments/reviews and professional judgement. The most vulnerable children will receive intensive interventions and co-ordinated support packages.

The school nursing service contributes to every child being offered a programme of screening tests, immunisations, reviews and information and guidance to promote healthy choices as described in the healthy child programme. The delivery of these will support health and wellbeing outcomes.

The school nursing service provides the core element of the school health team while forming an integral part of the wider

Healthy Child Programme team. The service delivers the programme 'from five to 19 years' through integrated services for children and their families. The Healthy Child Programme is delivered by a range of professionals across general practice, sexual health services, immunisation teams, safeguarding, youth workers, counsellors, public health specialists, education, further education, amongst others⁴. The service is provided in a range of settings including schools, doctors' surgeries, other community settings, hospitals and family settings. The exact location depends on the agreement between the member of the school nursing team, the child, young person and their family or carer.

The school nursing service will ensure that children are offered appropriate referral to specialist services, and will signpost families to wider support.

As Specialist Community Public Health Nurses, school nurses work, as appropriate, with a range of other services including NHS community services, doctors, CAMHs, acute hospital trusts, public health, local authorities, education, Youth Offending Service, and voluntary services.

School nursing teams work across professions and organisations, uniting the multi-professional and multi-agency team around a common goal. The aim is to ensure that communication, information sharing and referral systems are in place so that no child or family 'falls through the net'.

Virtual School Kent, roles and responsibilities

The virtual school head role was successfully piloted by 11 authorities for two years between 2007 and 2009.

The evaluation of the pilots found that the virtual school head role can make a real difference, especially when the virtual school head has a strategic role and sufficient seniority to influence practice and the use of resources across the authority.

Following the evaluation, the expectation was that by Easter 2010, all local authorities should have appointed a virtual school head. The core purpose of this role is to be relentless in driving up improvements in the educational progress and attainment of all looked after children.

The Virtual School Kent was established in September 2010. By organising, focussing and coordinating the efforts of a range of professionals and others, The Virtual School aims to:

- Ensure that every child in the care of Kent has the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential by identifying and addressing the barriers that prevent them achieving their potential
- To narrow the gap between the attainments and achievements of young people who have been in Kent Local Authority Care and those of their peers who have not
- To improve their life chances by highlighting specific areas of action and taking appropriate steps to address them.

It ensures education and health needs and service delivery are an integral part of the care process planning for Kent looked

after children and young people. It aims to improve educational and health outcomes for this vulnerable group of learners.

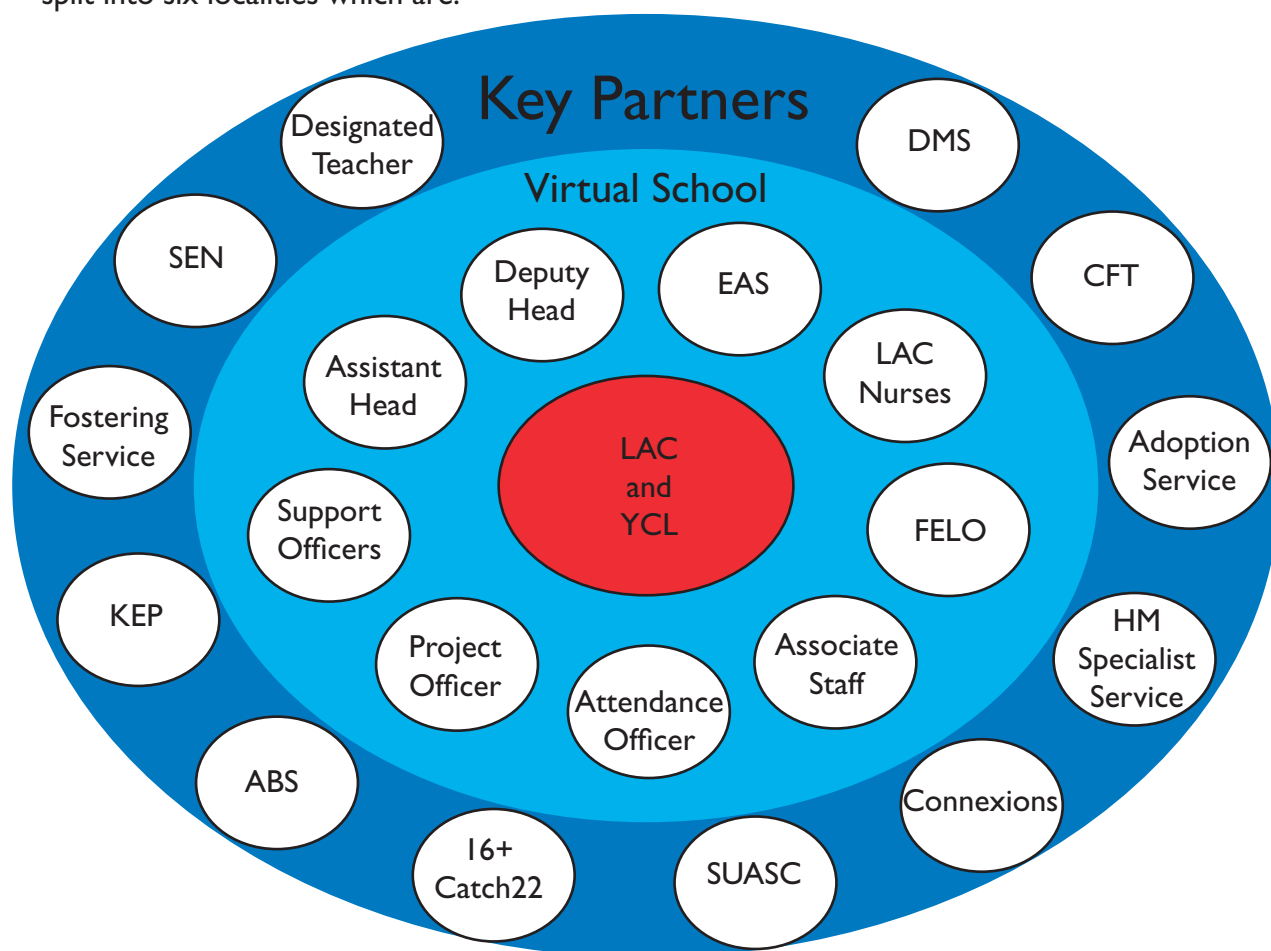
The Virtual School Kent has:

- a website www.virtualschool.lea.kent.sch.uk. The website has separate education, health, social care and foster carer pages. It endeavours to share good practice and is a portal for information advice and guidance
- an integrated data set - the website links via a secure gateway to our integrated data set, and on to national, Kent, area and district looked after children data sets
- a governing body - hosted by the newly formed Corporate Parenting Panel.

- North West Kent - Sevenoaks, Dartford and Gravesham
- South West Kent - Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling and Maidstone
- East Kent 1 - Canterbury and Swale
- East Kent 2 - Ashford and Shepway
- East Kent 3 - Thanet
- East Kent 4 - Dover and lead responsibility for Kent looked after children placed out of authority and SEN

The rationale behind this locality based model is to create a Virtual School Kent Team around our looked after children. The Virtual School Kent is based on partnership working with colleagues from Families and Social Care, Education Learning and Skills, Safeguarding Children’s Health Services, CAMHs, Connexions, health authorities and independent care providers to really deliver holistic support.

The Virtual School Kent delivers a locality based model. Virtual School Kent will be split into six localities which are:



The Virtual School Kent senior leadership team:

- A Head Teacher
- A Service Manager
- Three Deputy Heads - Achievement and Standards, East and West Kent and Education Assessment

The core team:

Assistant head - progress and achievement:

- Track and monitor the progress of all KCC looked after children in the locality.
- Assess their learning needs and identify barriers to success. Co-ordinate the deployment of support.
- Quality assure education planning for all KCC looked after children in the locality.
- Supervise transition planning. Model good Education planning practice.
- Supervise looked after children Education training within the locality for designated teachers, schools, social workers, foster carers and governors.
- Advocate for all KCC looked after children in the Locality positively challenging the practice of schools, CFE and other agency services, CandF Teams and Fostering Teams

Fostering education liaison officers

- To provide support and guidance to carers/parents, families and social workers of children and young people in the care of KCC in a school context, to enable positive participation, to encourage their involvement in the

learning environment and improve their learning opportunities.

- To work directly with carers/parents, empowering them and their children get the most out of the educational opportunities available to them.
- To work with carers/parents on preventative and early intervention strategies and link to other specialist services and agencies within the child's network of support.

Looked after children nurses

- Looked after children's nurses provide a comprehensive programme of holistic, co-ordinated health care to those children who are 'Looked After' and currently live in the Kent Community NHS Trust economy, or were living in this PCT area at the time of entering care before April 2007
- The service works in partnership to provide support for their carers, teachers and social workers to promote the achievement of optimum health and wellbeing of this client group and so improve the life chances of looked after children
- The primary aim of the service is to achieve the best health and wellbeing outcomes for all looked after children. This is achieved by the co-ordination and undertaking of the statutory annual health review looked after children's health assessments (six monthly for those aged under five years old), and the formulation, implementation and monitoring of holistic health care plans in collaboration with the local authority
- The service monitors and screens health and development including immunisations, smoking, alcohol and substance misuse, sexual health and emotional health and

- wellbeing (age appropriate)
- The service identifies individual risks and protective factors provide opportunities for health promotion and relevant guidance to carers, parents, teachers and social workers.

Support officers:

- Provide support to teachers and schools allowing qualified teachers to make even more effective use of their time, as well as building capacity within other associate staff
- Contribute to pupils' learning and will have a significant impact on pupils' achievement
- The primary focus of the support officer's post is to work under the professional direction of the assistant head within the Virtual School Kent as part of the professional team to support learning activities for pupils
- Deliver withdrawal session set by or with the assistant head or teachers and/or support pupils undertaking lessons delivered via distance learning or computer-aided techniques
- Progress pupils' learning and to assess, record and report on development, progress and attainment as agreed with the teacher.

The Education Assessment Service (EAS):

- EAS provides a service to unaccompanied asylum seeking children who arrive in Kent and become 'looked after' if they are assessed as being under 18 years old.
- When they arrive they are not assigned to a school/college immediately but are assessed by EAS to identify their initial

- educational needs prior to planning and subsequent education placement
- EAS is also responsible for advising and negotiating with schools and colleges at a strategic level to ensure that appropriate education provision is available to meet the needs of unaccompanied asylum seekers. These young people have in many cases had limited and / or interrupted formal education and have little or no English language on arrival.

Associate partners

The Virtual School Kent works alongside partner agencies and involves staff from these services:

Connexions personal advisers:

- Connexions Kent provides a service to young people aged 13-19 years old. It also supports young people up to the age of 25 who have a learning difficulty or disability
- Connexions Kent provides an integrated and impartial approach to guiding and supporting young people through their teenage years
- Any information shared with a personal adviser is dealt with in confidence. Connexions Kent will not share this information with any other agencies unless we believe that what they have told us could put them or someone else at risk, or if it would help or be of benefit to the young person, such as a job or training opportunity
- All young people within this age group, including those who are looked after children and care leavers, have access to the universal services provided by Connexions Kent.

- In addition the Connexions service has nominated looked after children personal advisers (PAs) who work closely with each of the three teams within the Virtual School Kent in order to provide a dedicated service to this group of young people
- These PAs have a key role in ensuring that the service to looked after children and the Virtual School Kent works effectively by brokering their knowledge across the wider Connexions Service
- They develop effective links with Connexions PAs in the twelve locality-based teams within Kent and colleagues within other priority group teams as appropriate
- They are responsible for reporting to the Virtual School Kent on the outcomes of referrals, ensuring intervention is undertaken in a timely fashion and informing of progress against agreed actions
- The looked after children PAs are supported by a team leader with responsibility for the operational management of the services provided by Connexions Kent to looked after children and care leavers.

Universal services

This includes impartial information, advice and guidance to young people on career options, finding work, staying on in education, training/apprenticeships, volunteering, managing money, benefits as well as issues affecting a young person's health and emotional wellbeing.

This is delivered by a combination of face-to-face interviews, group work and signposting to information.

Targeted/intensive support

In addition to the universal services, referral can be made to the Intensive Support Service. This is delivered by individual work with those young people facing multiple barriers to achieving their potential and planning/supporting them at transition periods.

It includes the use of focused support and tracking of key targets, including attendance at information, advice and guidance interviews, September Guarantee and the use of the Six Session Approach for face-to-face work. This approach involves clear action planning and regular review of progress with the young person in order that work undertaken provides results which improve outcomes for the young person.

The personal adviser working with the young person may be a dedicated looked after children PA or it may be a colleague from one of the other priority groups (YOT/Health/LDD). This is determined by the primary need for the young person at the time of referral and reviewed as necessary.

Education welfare officers:

- The looked after children education welfare officers are responsible for both Kent and OLA looked after children (prioritising Kent looked after children under 85%) who are registered in Kent's schools where absence impacts upon local authority and individual school performance
- They provide support and challenge to schools and education providers to address barriers which impact upon looked after children's regular attendance
- Key issues to be reported to Virtual

School Kent Team, for example, where excessive absence due to medical appointments in school time

- Ensure compliance with statutory responsibilities of ABS
- They provide flexible allocation across the county, responding to individual requests requiring intensive support
- They work alongside the wider ABS Team, where whole school absence/persistent absenteeism has been deemed higher than national average due to looked after children absence
- The education welfare officers maintain individual pupil caseloads and are supervised on a monthly basis by locality district managers
- Their role is to contribute in reducing overall absence in partnership with ABS generic EWOs and inclusion/exclusion officers.

Attendance and Behaviour Service – core objectives:

- Reduce rates of non-attendance and exclusion
- Ensure pupils out-of-school have timely access to full time education
- Support development and delivery and assure the quality of a range of diverse educational and vocational opportunities for young people
- Ensure provision of alternative education appropriate for pupils and young people unable to engage with, or excluded from mainstream school
- Support children and young people in developing the skills to enable them to engage appropriately in school
- Monitor, track and support children missing education
- Safeguard the rights of school-aged children in employment and

entertainment

- Offer support to children educated at home to ensure they are receiving a suitable education.

Designated teachers

Since September 2009, the governing bodies of maintained schools have had a statutory obligation to appoint a designated teacher who is responsible for supporting the educational achievement of the looked after child on the school roll.

The Virtual School Kent works closely with the designated teacher in schools who provides a central point of contact within the school. They should have lead responsibility for helping school staff to understand the things which affect how looked after children learn and achieve. An important role of the Virtual School Kent is to provide training and support for the designated teachers, and to challenge school performance in areas such as attendance and behaviour.

The designated teacher should:

- Promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations for how looked after children learn
- Make sure the young person has a voice in setting learning targets
- Be a source of advice for staff about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual children and in making full use of Assessment for Learning
- Make sure that looked after children are prioritised in one-to-one tuition, and that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home
- Have lead responsibility for the

development and implementation of the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) within the school

- Make sure there is an agreed process in place for how the school works with others
- Focus on how everyone contributes to promoting the child's educational achievement
- Communicate school policies (e.g. around Home School Agreements) to social workers and carers
- Ensure the school does everything possible to maximise educational stability for the child, especially by finding ways of sharing information through the PEP and in providing advice to the local authority about the impact of disrupting education.

Improving emotional and mental health

The Virtual School Kent is responsible for commissioning from Kent and Medway Partnership Trust a targeted integrated mental health service for Kent looked after children which sits alongside child and adolescent mental health services.

The service provides a specialist approach to improve the emotional health and wellbeing of Kent looked after children and young people living in Kent County Council placements aged 0 – 16 years. This is through an enhanced, therapeutic approach, supporting foster carers and the professional team around the child to promote permanence and placement stability.

Virtual School Kent, legislation and guidance:

The Virtual School Kent service is provided in accordance with the following:

The Children Act 1989

The Children Act 2004

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Section 2, Annex A)

The Children and Young Persons Act 1969

The Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001

The Leaving Care Act 2000

The Criminal Justice and Immigration Act

The Children (Leaving Care) Regulations 2001

The Adoption and Children Act 2002

The Children Act 2004

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008

Statutory guidance on The Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children (2009)

NICE/SCIE guidance on the health of looked after children

Who Pays? Establishing the Responsible Commissioner DH (2007)

Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked After Children. (2009) Department for Children, Schools and Families and Dept. of Health

Promoting the Quality of Life of Looked-After Children and Young People. (2010) National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence Healthy Lives, Brighter Futures. Department of Health and Department for Children, Schools and Families. February 2009

The Healthy Child Programme (Pregnancy and the First Five Years of Life). Department of Health and Department for Children, Schools and Families. October 2009

The Healthy Child Programme: 5-19 years.

Department of Health and Department for Children, Schools and Families. October 2009

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) Department for Children, Schools and Families

Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care. Department for Children, (2006)

Care Matters: Time for Change 2007.

Department for Children Schools and Families

Catch22 (16+ service)

This service meets the needs of young people aged 16-21yrs (25yrs if in higher education or other agreed training or education provision who are looked after by the local authority or have been previously looked after by the local authority). The purpose of the service is to enable these young people to have the opportunity to enjoy stability of placement, to maximise their social and educational achievement, achieve economic independence, to progress to adulthood and achieve their potential in life.

The Catch22 16plus team is a multi-disciplinary team who bring a range of skills and experience to their work with young people. The team comprises social workers, caseworkers, accommodation officers, mental health workers and youth workers.

Operations manager

The operations manager provides managerial oversight to all three teams. They are responsible for:

- Management and supervision of all contract requirements
- Strategic developments of the service
- Performance management
- Budget responsibility.

Team leaders

They are responsible for:

- Performance management
- Day to day budget allocation
- Liaison with children and families teams
- Liaison with other professionals
- Development and maintenance of good practice
- Ensuring all statutory work is undertaken.

Social workers

Social workers will work with eligible young people. They will be responsible for:

- Undertaking an assessment of needs of the young people as defined by part I of the pathway planning process.
- Preparation and maintenance of the pathway plan based on the assessed needs and following on from discussion and involvement of the young person and their carers to
- Maintain monthly contact with the young person their families and / or carers
- Develop constructive relationships with a range of other services and professionals
- Keep accurate and up to date records.

Case workers

Case workers will work with relevant and former relevant young people. The caseworker is the key professional responsible for co-ordinating each care leaver's support. They will:

- Provide advice and support
- Develop constructive professional relationships with a range of other agencies
- Participate in assessments and

- preparation of pathway plans
- Co-ordinate how services are provided to the young person
- Participate in the review of the pathway plan
- Keep accurate and up to date records.

Accommodation officer

The accommodation officers will work alongside operational staff in providing a range of alternative approved accommodation for young people who wish to move on from their foster carers and gain independent living skills. They will:

- Recruit a range of suitable approved providers of supported accommodation
- ensure the accommodators are appropriately trained
- Provide group support evenings
- Provide regular supervision to the providers
- Ensure young people's needs are matched with appropriate providers
- Keep accurate and up to date records.

Mental health workers

The mental health workers will work alongside operational staff in providing professional support in all aspects of mental health. They will:

- Provide advice and support to staff members on individual cases
- Undertake direct work with young people as identified via the pathway planning process
- Liaise with other health professionals from children's and adult mental health services
- Assist in referrals of young people to

- CAHMs and adult services
- Organise support groups for young people
- Provide training and discussion groups to the staff teams
- Keep accurate and up to date records.

Youth worker

The youth worker will work with each team. They will:

- Train young people to participate in interviews of staff within Catch22 and KCC
- Ensure young people assist in the recruitment of foster carers and Supported accommodators
- Organise quarterly consultation events for young people
- Organise and run the monthly young people's action groups
- Organise a range of residential opportunities
- Organise day trips
- Ensure young people are represented on local, county and national initiatives and consultation events.

Administrative staff

Provide support services to each team at a local level. They provide:

- telephone/reception duties
- Filing
- Payment of invoices
- Payment of subsistence to young people
- Invitation to meetings
- Minute taking
- General administrative duties

Independent visitors

There is a duty upon the local authority to arrange for an independent visitor to be provided for any looked after child or young person, where it appears to be in the best interests of that child or young person to do so. Such provision should be considered as part of the care plan or as part of a case review.

Independent visitors are trained volunteers whose role is to:

- Promote the child/young person's developmental, social, emotional, educational, religious and cultural needs
- Encourage the child/young person to exercise his/her rights and to participate in decisions which will affect him/her
- Support the care plan for the child/young person and his/her carers
- Aim, as far as possible, to complement the activities of the carers.

The independent visitor's functions are to visit, advise and befriend the child/young person. Befriending involves establishing a relationship of trust over a period of time and being a consistent adult in the child/young person's life.

Independent visitors for Kent's looked after children and young people and care leavers are provided through the Kent Independent Visitors Service, which is responsible for recruiting, training, supervising and supporting the volunteers and for receiving and 'matching' referrals.

The Young Lives Foundation is commissioned to provide the independent visitor service for Kent.

Upfront Rights and Advocacy Service

Upfront is the independent rights and advocacy service for all Kent's looked after children and care leavers, and is provided in line with the National Standards for the Provision of Children's Advocacy Services (Dept of Health, 2002). The role of the advocate is to represent the views, wishes and needs of the child or young person to the decision-makers, and to help the child or young person navigate the system. Advocacy is led by the views and wishes of children and young people and champions their rights and needs.

Referrals for advocacy can be made to Upfront by the child or young person themselves or by another on their behalf (e.g. social worker, carer or parent). The advocate will meet with the child/young person to identify the advocacy issue and map out the process for raising and seeking resolution of that issue. The steps to be taken will be agreed with the child/young person including the level and type of advocacy support the child/young person wishes to receive. Some children/young people may choose to make a complaint through Kent County Council's formal complaint procedure, the advocate will support them during each required stage of the procedure.

The Young Lives Foundation is commissioned to provide this service for Kent's looked after children and care leavers.

Annex B:

The Kent Pledge to children and young people looked after by Kent County Council

We understand that being in care and leaving care isn't always easy and that it can bring extra challenges and pressures for you. If we are going to get it right for you we need to make a real difference to help you do your best and have success in your life.

Our pledge includes a number of things we will do that will help make sure that your time in care is a positive experience. These are based around six themes:

- A sense of belonging
- An adult who is always there for you while you are in care
- A good education
- Good memories for the future
- Getting ready for being an adult
- Championing your needs and interests.

We are making a pledge to you because you are a child or young person in care or leaving care living in Kent.

Ideally we would want to make the same commitments to all children in care living in Kent, but this is not possible at the moment. This is because your needs are different, and it also depends on which local authority is responsible for your care. It is just as important to make sure that the commitments that we make to you are ones that we are confident that we can keep and that will be important to you and have a positive effect in your life.

This is why we have made two separate pledges. These are:

- Our pledge to children and young people looked after by Kent County Council

- Our pledge to children and young people in care placed in Kent by another local authority.

We will check our pledge to you often so that, when we can, we will improve on the commitments that we make and listen to your views.

We understand that being in care and leaving care isn't always easy and that it can bring extra challenges and pressures for you. If we are going to get it right for you, we need to make a real difference to help you do your best and have success in your life.

Our pledge includes a number of things we will do that will help to make sure that your time in care is a positive experience. These are based around six themes:

- A sense of belonging
- An adult who is always there for you while you are in care
- A good education
- Good memories for the future
- Getting ready for being an adult
- Championing your needs and interests.

We will check our pledge to you often so that, when we can, we will improve on the commitments that we make and listen to your views.

A sense of belonging

We will:

- Find a placement for you that is as near as we can to your family and friends
- Help you keep in contact with family and friends and, when this is not possible, give you a clear reason why
- Make sure we take into account your views and, if appropriate your parents' views of the type of carers that you would want when choosing your placement and short break/respice care
- When we make decisions, take account of your age, background and beliefs, including your ethnic and cultural needs and any needs you may have because of a disability, especially communication needs
- Arrange for you to get your National Insurance number for your 16th birthday or as soon as possible after being entitled to have one
- Get you a passport by your 16th birthday if you are legally allowed to have one - sooner if you need one to go on holidays with your carers and take part in school activities.

An adult who is always there for you while you are in care

We will:

- Make sure that you have a named social worker or caseworker and an independent reviewing officer and know how you can contact them
- Make sure that you have at least one person in your life who you can expect to be around throughout your time in care
- Make sure that you have a named nurse that you can contact if you have any questions about your health.

A good education

We will:

- Make sure that you have a place at a school that will help you to do your best;
- Make sure that three- and four-year old children in care can go to early years education
- Work with your school and the 'designated' teacher to help you do your best (all schools should choose a teacher who is in charge of all of the school's services for those children in care who go to the school)
- Give you chances and support to stay in education beyond 16, including help going to university and further education if you want to do this
- Help you catch up with schoolwork if you fall behind
- Expect your carers to take an active interest in your education and make good links with your school, including going to parent's evenings and other school events
- Provide a computer if you have been in care for six months or more and are aged 11 years or over and, if appropriate, access to the internet
- Celebrate your achievements and success.

Good memories for the future

We will:

- Provide for you opportunities to take part in hobbies and interests (including sports, art and music)
- Help you build a photo album of important people in your life and places you have been to while in care.

Getting ready for being an adult

We will:

- Make sure that we ask you about important decisions we make in your life
 - If you have a disability, make sure that you have your own 'communication passport', if you need one, that tells others how you communicate and how they can communicate with you
 - Make sure that the home we provide for you when you are going to leave care is safe and properly supported, and that temporary accommodation is a last resort and used for as little time as possible
 - Up to your 21st birthday, help you with council tax and making sure you don't lose out on Housing Benefit as a result of taking part in education, training and low-paid employment;
 - Help you make the most of your chances for training, further education and employment
 - Give you £1000 for every year you complete in higher education or up to a maximum of £2000 for the whole period of the course
 - Make sure that your move to adult services, if you need them, is as smooth as possible.
- complain and how to get in touch with Upfront (Kent's Children's Rights Service), who can give you support to help you make a complaint
- Give you access to a solicitor (at our cost) if you want legal advice about your care order, or any other legal order affecting you - such as contact with certain people in your life.

Championing your needs and interests

We will:

- Make sure that you are able to tell us your wishes, feelings and interests - taking into account any disabilities you have
- Listen to your wishes and feelings before making decisions that affect you and support you if you need help to do this
- Work with you and your family to make sure that plans for your care are up to date and meet your educational, health and care needs
- Make sure that you know how to

