

Cabinet

Report Title	Westmorland and Furness Cared for Children and Care Experienced Young People's Strategy
Date of Meeting	30 April 2024
Report Author	Jonathan Taylor, Assistant Director - Children and Families Susan Hodkin, Partnership and Improvement Manager
Director	Milorad Vasic, Director – Childrens Services
Lead Cabinet Member	Cllr Sue Sanderson
Why is this a key decision?	<p>1. An executive decision which is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates. NO</p> <p>2. or is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the Council. For these purposes, savings and expenditure are "significant" if they are equal to or greater than £500,000. NO</p> <p>For clarification, no treasury management decision shall constitute a Key Decision.</p>
Wards Affected	All
Identify exempt information and exemption category	N/A
Reasons for urgency (only where applicable)	N/A
Appendices (if any)	Appendix 1 – Care For and Care Experienced Strategy

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Cabinet with an overview of our new strategy for cared-for children in Westmorland and Furness. Unlike the preceding county strategy, concluding in 2023, this new strategy is tailored specifically to our local context.

2. Recommendations

For the reasons set out in this report, Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Endorse the Cared for Children and Care Experienced Young People's Strategy.
- 2.2 Consider and discuss how the broad spectrum of the council can contribute to the development and the delivery of the strategy.

3. Information: the Rationale & Evidence for the Recommendations

- 3.1 **Statutory Obligation:** It is our statutory duty to have a strategy in place for cared-for children. This document not only fulfils that obligation but also goes beyond, embodying a commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to the evolving needs of the children and young people in our care.
- 3.2 Successful delivery of the strategy will depend on effective collaboration with partners, and the various stakeholders including statutory agencies and community organisations and networks. The council must actively develop and maintain these partnerships to enhance the overall system for cared for children and care experienced young people.
- 3.3 Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be crucial so that the council can regularly assess the impact of the strategy, ensuring that it meets its intended goals.
- 3.4 To enable us to do this we propose to establish a multi-agency cared for children partnership board. We will establish key performance indicators (KPI's) and feedback mechanisms to track progress and provide challenge.
- 3.5 **Alignment with Our Promise:** The priorities outlined in the new strategy are rooted in the voices of the children in our care, reflecting the insights gathered from "Our Promise" and the wider consultations that we have undertaken. By incorporating their perspectives, we aim to ensure that our approach resonates with the actual needs and aspirations of the children in our care.
- 3.6 **Inclusive Consultation:** A significant aspect of the strategy development process involved consultation with care experienced young adults. This collaboration was not just a one-way process but a co-production, fostering a sense of ownership and relevance among those who have experienced our care system. Their valuable input has shaped the strategy to be more responsive and in sync with the realities that they face.
- 3.7 **Local Focus:** Recognising the unique needs and dynamics of Westmorland and Furness, our strategy is tailored to address the specific challenges and opportunities within our local communities.
- 3.8 **Delivery Plan:** A delivery plan that outlines specific milestones and timelines for the effective implementation of the strategy will be developed.

4. Link to Council Plan Priorities: (People, Climate, Communities, Economy and Culture, Customers, Workforce)

- 4.1 The strategy links to most of the priorities within the council plan, specifically: Supporting active, healthy happy lives for young and old. We are ambitious for all our children and young people; committed to listening to their aspirations and showing them how much we care.

5. Consultation Outcomes

- 5.1 Consultation with care experienced children and young people identified several changes to the strategy, including a change to the priority of 'partnerships with carers' to 'relationships with carers'
- 5.2 Consultation with Corporate Parenting Board has brought about some changes to the document including more of description of the partnership responsibility to corporate parenting.

6. Alternative Options Considered

- 6.1 N/A

7. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 7.1 As outlined in the report, the local authority has a duty to publish a strategy for care for and care experienced children and young people.

8. Climate and Biodiversity Implications

- 8.1 N/A

9. Legal and Governance Implications

- 9.1 The local authority is under a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of any child it is looking after. This includes, in particular, a duty to promote the child's educational achievement.
- 9.2 A local authority may be under a statutory duty to provide care leaving support. Entitlement to care leaving support depends on the age of the young person, the length of time they were looked after and their age when they ceased to be looked after by the local authority. The categories of children entitled to support as care leavers and the main obligations owed to them are set out in more detail in [Volume 3 of the Children Act Statutory Guidance](#) pages 10-14. In certain situations the duty to provide support will continue until the young person's 25th birthday.
- 9.3 There will be young people with care experience in Westmorland and Furness to whom the local authority owes no statutory duty to provide care leaving support, either because they do not meet the criteria for support (typically

because they ceased to be looked after before their 16th birthday) or because they were last looked after by another local authority.

- 9.4 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced a set of corporate parenting principles which a local authority must have regard to when carrying out its functions in relation to children and young people who are looked after by the local authority or are entitled to care leaving support as a relevant child or a former relevant child. The corporate parenting principles do not replace or change existing legal duties, for example in relation to the provision of accommodation for care leavers aged 18 and above. The corporate parenting principles do not alter the legal position that the duty to provide care leaving support is owed by the local authority that last looked after the child.
- 9.5 The Government has stated its ambition to strengthen and extend corporate parenting responsibilities for children in care and care leavers
- 9.6 The local authority is required to prepare strategic plan for children in care, a corporate parenting strategy/plan and a strategy for care leavers. These plans will be requested prior to any OFSTED inspection. The local authority is also under a legal duty to consult on and publish a “local offer for care leavers” setting out the services it offers to care leavers.

10. Human Resources Health Wellbeing and Safety Implications

- 10.1 There are no direct health, wellbeing or safety implications but HR / OD are able to support where required and ensure links to the people plan.

11. Financial Implications

- 11.1 This report requests the endorsement of the new ‘Cared for Children and Care Experienced Young People’s Strategy’. The proposals contained within the report do not result in any additional financial implications to the local authority.

12. Equality and Diversity Implications (please ensure these are compliant with the EIA Guidance)

- 12.1 Care experienced protected characteristic. EIA to follow.

13. Background Documents

- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Childrens Act 2004
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers: The Children Act 1989
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Care Leaver Covenant (DfE 2018)