



Directorate for Children's Services
*Director **John Coughlan CBE***

Isle of Wight

Children in Care Strategy

2013 - 2015

Simon Dear
Children and Families

01983 821000

Simon.dear@iow.gov.uk

Version 2.0

1 Document Information

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Title | Children in Care Strategy 2013 - 2015 |
| Status | Draft |
| Current version | V0.4 (17/01/2014) |
| Author | Steve Handforth, Area Director and Simon Dear Commissioning Officer |
| Department | Children and Families |
| Email | Stephen.handforth@IOW.gov.uk |
| Telephone | (01983) 821000 Ext 6288 |
| Sponsor | Steve Crocker, Assistant Director Children's Services Hampshire and the Isle of Wight |
| Department | Children's Services |
| Email | @IOW.gov.uk |
| Telephone | (01983) 821000 x 6764 |
| Consultation | Consultation: |
| | Children in Care Council |
| | Foster Carers |
| | Children and Families Services |
| | Independent Reviewing Service |
| Approved by | Corporate Parenting Board |
| Approval Date | 27/01/2014 |
| Review Frequency | Annually |
| Next Review | 30 December 2014 |
| Reviewed | |

| Version History | | |
|------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| Version | Date | Description |
| 0.1 | | Initial draft |
| 0.2 | 27/09/2013 | Updated |
| 0.3 | 09/12/2013 | Revised + Equality Impact Assessment |
| 0.4 | 17/01/2014 | Second Revision |
| 0.5 | 27/01/2014 | Corporate Parenting Board |
| 0.6 | 29/01/2014 | CMT |

2 Contents

1 Document information

2 Contents

3 Introduction

- 3.1 Scope
- 3.2 Background
- 3.3 Definitions
- 3.4 Glossary

4 Aims and Objectives

- 4.1 Aims of the Isle of Wight Children in Care Strategy
- 4.2 Objectives of the Isle of Wight Children in Care Strategy
- 4.3 Complaints
- 4.4 Equality and Diversity Statement
- 4.5 Human Rights Act

5 Components of the Isle of Wight Children in Care Strategy

- 5.1 Early Help
- 5.2 A Strong and Consistent 'Front Door'
- 5.3 Early Permanency
- 5.4 Support and Help
- 5.5 Participation
- 5.6 The Intelligent use of Data
- 5.7 Sufficiency Duty and Commissioning
- 5.8 Residential Care
- 5.9 Placement Stability
- 5.10 Health
- 5.11 Education
- 5.12 The experiences and progress of care leavers
- 5.13 Children in Care who are at risk of entered, or who have already entered, the criminal justice system:

6 How will we know if we have been successful?

Appendix A:

Link to all the relevant policies and procedures

Annex: Support organisations

3 INTRODUCTION

The services and support that we provide to children in our care are so important in helping them now and in shaping their future. This strategy says what we have done, and what we still need to do.

We recognise we need to strengthen our arrangements with working with partners to improve what support we provide and how we provide it. We need to listen to what children in care have to say about their experiences of coming into care, being in care and leaving care either going back to their families or becoming adults.

We need to do more than listen to improve what we do. We need to change and respond. We need to show that changes have been made, that services have improved and that we can evidence that what we do does make a difference to the lives of children and that outcomes for children and young people have been achieved.

We have the pledge for care leavers and looked after children launched in January 2010 and our held to account by our Children in Care Council and our progress measured and reported annually back to our Corporate Parenting Board. The pledge and our promises show our on-going commitment to listen to children and young people in care so that we make sure that their needs are at the centre of what we do.

We achieved our Leading Improvements for Looked After Children Award in 2012 and we continue to identify where further improvements need to be made. We have an effective Children in Care Council which has achieved improvements for children in care. These include raising the leaving care grant from £500 to £2,000 and informing the development of apprenticeships within the Isle of Wight Council for looked after young people.

This strategy sets out how the Isle of Wight Council's Children and Families Services, together with our partner agencies, will continue to meet the needs of all children who are in our care.

Cllr Richard Priest, Lead Member for Children

3.1 SCOPE

The vast majority of children on the Isle of Wight grow up within their own caring and nurturing birth families. When children cannot remain with their birth parents, the Isle of Wight is committed to supporting and encouraging placements within extended families that are able to offer safe and secure care. This policy is underpinned by the Children Acts, 1989 and 2004, and the Human Rights Act (Article 8).

Research evidence suggests that many young people feel a sense of emotional permanence, feeling safe and secure living with extended families and such placements minimise disruption and offer greater stability and better continuity of culture and community.

Placements with extended family members can be temporary or long term and are frequently arranged without any involvement of the statutory services. Most families sort out short-term care crises themselves through informal arrangements. However research has shown that family and friends care arrangements can have an impact on children and families and therefore help and support should be made available to them.

However, there will always be some children and young people, for reasons of abuse, neglect or for other reasons, for whom being in the care of the Isle of Wight Council will be in their best interests. As corporate parents the Isle of Wight Council will remove any and all barriers that may exist in order that children in care achieve their potential.

These same children and young people deserve the highest quality social workers, foster carers, residential homes, health care and education and training. These services must not disadvantage them amongst their peers, and should also redress the disadvantages that they may already have experienced prior to them coming into care.

The primary focus for children in care is to safeguard all children in care especially those who go missing. The principles upon which this Children in Care Strategy is based are that the Isle of Wight Council will enable children in care to have the best possible start in life, achieving their potential and achieving in education and be supported to become successful independent adults taking an active role in their communities.

This Children in Care Strategy sets out the help and support that is available for children and young people on the Isle of Wight.

3.2 BACKGROUND

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER (CHILDREN IN CARE)

The term Children Looked After has a specific legal meaning based on the Children Act. A child is looked after by a local authority if he or she has been provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, in the circumstances set out in sections 20 and 21 of the Children Act 1989, or is placed in the care of a local authority by virtue of an order made under part IV of the Act.

The majority of children who are looked after by the local authority are placed with **foster carer's** as it is believed to be best for children to live within a family environment.

For some children however, residential care may be more appropriate.

3.3 DEFINITIONS

Participation

Article 12 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrines the right of a young person to 'have opinions in all matters affecting them, and those views should be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child'.

This places a duty on the Local Authority to facilitate active participation of children and young people, on the Isle of Wight, in decisions that affect them. For the purposes of this strategy we refer to the obligations of systemic participation; that is to participate in discussions and decisions about the services they receive, including discussions on strategy, policy, appointment of staff and best practice/ front line delivery of the above strategies and policies. The Isle of Wight Participation Strategy sets out in more detail how this will be achieved.

What does 'looked after' mean?

'Looked After' - a provision made under the Children's Act 1989 in England and Wales, the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 whereby a local authority / Health and Social Care Trust has obligations to provide for, or share, the care of a child or young person under 16 years of age where parent(s) or guardian(s) for whatever reason are prevented from providing them with a suitable accommodation or care. A child is 'looked after' if he or she is provided with accommodation, or in Scotland is subject to a supervision order made by a children's hearing (even if they are staying in the family home), or if they are subject to certain provision imposed by the system.

Who is a 'care leaver' according to the legal definition?

Care Leaver - a person who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who was in care on their 16th birthday.

A young person's status as a care leaver can be divided into the following:

Eligible Child - a young person who is 16 or 17 and who has been looked after by the local authority/Health and Social Care Trust for at least a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who is still looked after.

Relevant Child - a young person who is 16 or 17 who has left care after their 16th birthday and before leaving care was an eligible child.

Former Relevant Child - a young person who is aged between 18 and 21 (or beyond if being helped with education or training) who, before turning 18 was either an eligible or a relevant child, or both.

For 16 and 17 year olds, the local authority / Health and Social Care Trust is responsible for the cost of accommodation, food, utility bills, other living expenses and travel costs for education and training. Care leavers aged between 18 and 22 can claim benefits (e.g. housing benefit) but local authorities have obligations to provide advice and guidance for care leavers up to age 19-21, depending on the nation in which they live, and may provide financial support for a care leaver until the end of a course. Those children returning home after being in care are not typically referred to as care-leavers.

3.4 GLOSSARY

Allocated Social Worker - the social worker allocated to an individual's case, and who leads on the care planning for that child.

Carer(s) - the person(s) directly responsible for looking after the child. If the child is in residential care this will be carried out by residential care workers, if in foster care the responsibility will be borne by the foster carer(s).

Care Order - made by the Courts in England, Wales and NI where there has been evidence accepted that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer 'significant harm' attributable to the care given or likely to be given to them. A Care Order results in the local authority / Health and Social Care Trust sharing parental responsibility for a child. The Care Order continues unless the child is adopted or becomes the subject of a residence order, or if the Care Order is revoked by the Court following evidence that the child's circumstances have changed; or lapses at age 18 years, i.e. legal adulthood.

Director of Children's Services - the senior person in the local authority / Health and Social Care Trust who is accountable for that authority's services for children including education, social services for children and some health functions.

The Virtual School - a team within a local authority with responsibility for improving the educational progress and attainment of children looked after by that authority. On the Isle of Wight this is provided through our social work teams and our Social Care Education Professionals working in these teams and with our Virtual Head teacher for children in care.

Looked After Child (LAC) Review - a statutory review meeting which convenes regularly (usually once every three or six months once initial reviews have been undertaken) to review and discuss the child's care, health and education plans. The Review is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and the meeting should include social care, education and health professionals, along with the foster carers and any other professionals working with the child.

Pathway Plan - a document drawn up by the responsible local authority / Health and Social Care Trust along with the young person which sets out: the manner in which the local authority / Trust proposes to meet the needs of the young person, when the local authority / Trust might cease to look after the young person, and the date by which and by whom the plan will be implemented.

Personal Education Plan (PEP) in England, Wales and NI - a continuous running record of the child/young person's school history and identifies what needs to happen for looked after children/young people to fulfil their potential by planning and establishing clear targets for the child/young person relating to learning achievements. A PEP should be completed for all looked after children/young people admitted to care at the three month LAC Review, six month LAC Review, and at six monthly intervals thereafter to coincide with LAC Reviews. On the Isle of Wight we link the PEP to inform how schools spend their pupil premium to improve educational outcomes for children in care.

Personal Adviser - a person who is appointed by the responsible local authority / Health and Social Care Trust responsible for overseeing the pathway plan and ensuring that the young person receives the support to which he or she is entitled in a co-ordinated and easily accessible way. They will be the main point of contact between a young person and his or her responsible local authority / Health and Social Care Trust. On the Isle of Wight we have a dedicated leaving care team with six personal advisors.

Residence Order - means an order settling the arrangements to be made as to the person with whom a child is to live.

Responsible Local Authority - the local authority whose duty it is to care for the Looked After Child. This may, or may not, be the local authority in whose area the child is currently living.

Supported Lodgings (England, Wales and Scotland only) - transitional accommodation providing placements for young people, who are usually, but not always, care leavers, to enable them to improve and develop their independence skills in an environment that will usually be a family home provided by a specialist accommodator or by a young person's former foster carer, where some support will be available.

4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 AIMS OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT CHILDREN IN CARE STRATEGY

The aim of the Children in Care Strategy is to set out the help and support that is available for children in care on the Isle of Wight.

Section 22C of the Children Act 1989 places a duty on a council looking after a child to provide accommodation and maintenance for him/her.

This council seeks to ensure that wherever possible, children are able to grow up with secure attachments to relatives or friends if they cannot live with their parents, and that such carers are capable of providing safe and effective care for them.

The Isle of Wight Council also works with children, young people and families to help them stay together. This work includes the full early help offer as well as more targeted work with children on the edge of care through our intensive support services.

Research has shown that when children cannot live with their birth parents they like to live with their extended family. The Isle of Wight Council wishes to promote the minimum statutory intervention in the lives of children for whom it has a duty of care by seeking alternative arrangements with family or friends through the use of this family and friends care policy.

In any care arrangements, the child's best interests are paramount and must take precedence over the interests of others involved. This council seeks to encourage the use of the common assessment framework, team around the family and family group conferences, where appropriate, to allow the family to take the lead in establishing the best solution for the child, although the council remains responsible for child protection issues.

4.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT CHILDREN IN CARE STRATEGY

The objectives of the strategy are:

- To ensure children in care receive the highest quality of care and that we plan for their future needs in participation with the child and their family members
- To highlight the numbers and profile of all children that are being cared for currently and understand the assessment and projection of need for children in care on the Isle of Wight
- To plan for the early help that can prevent children coming into care and can help return them back home or to their extended family quickly where appropriate
- To consider and address where possible any negative impacts that being in care may have on children including having the highest quality of social work, foster care and residential homes
- To promote to children, families and other agencies what help and advice is available to them to support these care arrangements
- To ensure the experiences and progress of care leavers are fully supported in making a successful transition to adulthood

4.3 COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

Any family or friend's carer or child or young person who is dissatisfied with the service received from the Isle of Wight Council may make a complaint as can foster carers, adopters and special guardians. Please contact the Complaints Manager, Social Care Directorate for Community Wellbeing and Social Care, Isle of Wight Council, 3rd Floor, County Hall, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 1UD. Tel: 01983 823093; Fax: 01983 823463; email: complaints@iow.gov.uk. Equally if we have helped in anyway or you think a member of our team deserves recognition do please let us know.

4.4 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The council recognises that many of the children and those who apply to become carers will come from diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, and/or may have particular disabilities and/or will have one or more protected characteristics under the Equality Act and that these must be taken into consideration when establishing the best arrangements for children.

The Isle of Wight Council's Equality and Diversity statement therefore applies to this policy and can be accessed from

www.iwight.com/council/workingforthecouncil/equality.com

4.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The Human Rights Act 1998 obliges public bodies, including local authorities, not to act in a way that is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights, unless forced to do so by legislation.

The articles most likely to be relevant in cases involving children are Article 6 (the right to a fair hearing), Article 8 (the right to respect for a person's private and family life) and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination). Under Article 8(2), the council may only interfere with the exercise of a person's right to private and family life in certain circumstances, such as for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Thus a parent's right to have his or her child living with him/her is balanced against that child's right to adequate physical and emotional care. In each case a balancing exercise will be required between the parents' rights, the child's rights and the rights of others with whom the child has a family life (such as siblings or other family members or carers).

The steps the council takes in placing a child with a carer must be justifiable on the facts of the case, proportionate to the interference with a person's human rights, and procedurally fair.

5 COMPONENTS OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT CHILDREN IN CARE POLICY

5.1 EARLY HELP

Early help services which may be offered to include:

- Common Assessment Framework, action plan and team around the child
- Parenting support programmes
- Family Information Zone
- Training programmes to assist with managing challenging behaviour.
- Access to welfare benefits advice (care leavers).
- Housing
- Membership of specific support groups.
- Access to the Primary Care Child and Adolescent Mental Health team
- Access to Young Carers project
- Independent counselling for children through the Isle of Wight Youth Trust, Barnardo and YMCA
- Children's Centres

5.2 A STRONG AND CONSISTENT ‘FRONT DOOR’

Establishing a strong and consistent ‘front door’ (i.e. the part of children’s social care services that provide the first contact and assessment for vulnerable children and families) that ensures we look after the right children at the right time is a crucial starting point in the child’s journey.

The Children’s Services Department front door will ensure those children who meet our threshold of intervention will be offered an assessment and subsequent service and a support package provided by our front line teams. Where appropriate our Intensive Support Service will engage with families to avoid the need to enter the care system.

The demand on children’s services has increased significantly in line with the national picture. The Isle of Wight has reorganised children’s services to create more social worker roles and has invested additional social work and support services to meet this demand over 2013 – 2014. This additional resource includes short term foster care and other specialist edge of care and shared care support. An invest to save business case has been approved to recruit more local authority foster carers and a business case is being developed to provide more in-authority accommodation and placements rather than placing children out of authority.

Models of intervention are being shaped using a systemic approach which will provide an enhanced, clear, child centred philosophy for our workforce that will promote the engagement of children.

5.3 EARLY PERMANENCY

When we do need to take a child into care we need to act quickly and decisively at an early stage in the child’s journey through the care system in order to give the child security and consistency of care. Acting within legislation, we will adopt the ‘golden thread’ of permanency throughout our decision making that starts at the front door.

Permanency requires us to make decisions that reflect the longer term needs of every child at every point in their journey and ensures we do not take decisions that are only based on short term requirements or the ‘here and now’. In line with our need to offer permanent solutions for the children and families we work with we will ensure every child in our care will have a plan for permanence.

5.4 SUPPORT AND HELP

Being in care itself can be worrying and unsettling for children and young people, that may be exacerbated by being some distance away from home (or vice versa). We will support all our children in care wherever they are placed and whoever they are placed with and we will ensure contact is maintained with their family based on individual needs.

5.5 PARTICIPATION

A participation strategy that is based on establishing clear views of the children and families that we serve is central to any strategy to deliver services to our children in care. The Children in care and Care Leavers Pledges are central to our developing participation strategy. This participation strategy is our commitment to change the way that services are planned, delivered and reviewed based, in part, on the views of our children in care and the experiences of the families that we serve.

5.6 THE INTELLIGENT USE OF DATA

Management information and performance management are key to any informed evidence based decisions about developing strategy and ensuring that resources will be effectively based on reliable quality assured data. Our “Children in Care Trend Report” will be updated every six months and our Performance Report will be updated and shared monthly at management meetings, team meetings, supervisions and scrutiny by Elected Members. Both data sets will be subject to public scrutiny and action planning.

5.7 SUFFICIENCY DUTY AND COMMISSIONING

In order to care for our children well, we need a good supply of high quality placements and homes. Our response to the Government’s ‘Sufficiency Duty’ requirements was to produce a sufficiency duty action plan and commissioning strategy to ensure we have the right provision in the right place for all our children in care. We will ensure that in order to meet our duty to provide sufficient placements, we will continue to deliver a mixed market of placement provision including for care leavers.

We remain committed to placing children as near to home as possible and appropriate. We recognise that any child or young person placed out of authority means they are physically placed ‘off island’ on the ‘mainland’ and that this may have an additional impact on them and their families so we will always plan for them to return to the Isle of Wight as soon as we are able to.

In support of our sufficiency duty we have developed a range of policies and procedures that will support our ability to provide alternative care for those children whose needs are best met away from their home. Our overarching “Friends and Family” policy is designed to offer a range of support to children and young people whose needs can be met by connected persons rather than having to enter the care system. There are a range of associated procedures which detail the financial and practical support available to these alternative arrangements.

For those children and young people who become looked after we have invested in the carer’s to be able to offer quality care. Our Skills to Foster prepares and trains

our foster carers. We have commissioned our parenting provider to deliver specific parenting programmes for foster carers as part of our foster carer training programme. We have published and work to our own foster carers charter and have supported foster carers to establish their own foster carers association to lead negotiation on pay, contracts and working together.

5.8 RESIDENTIAL CARE

We have joined the tender for the supply of 16+ accommodations with Hampshire County Council and are part of the project group developing frameworks for the supply of quality, competitively priced residential placements for children in care and children who need residential school placements to meet their special educational needs.

Locally we are working with our three children's homes including Beaulieu House our in-house residential children's home for children with disability and respite centre to increase their capacity.

An invest to save business case is being developed to provide more accommodation for care leavers.

An outcomes framework has been developed and is used through the joint commissioning and solutions panel that has to approve all residential placements. This is to inform the performance management and quality assurance of each residential provider to achieve the progress and outcomes designated in the care plan based on the assessment of need of each child and young person.

In addition, each child in an out of authority placement is currently being assessed for their risk of sexual exploitation to ensure sufficient safeguards are put in place to protect them and prevent this risk.

5.9 PLACEMENT STABILITY

We know that outcomes for children are better when they are able to form long term relationships with carers. To that end we have a "Placement Stability Plan" and associated practice guidance that will ensure that we secure permanent long term care arrangements for children.

5.10 HEALTH

Looked after children and young people share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but often to a much greater degree. They often enter care with a worse level of health than their peers in part due to the impact of poverty, abuse and neglect.

Some of the health issues affecting Children in Care include sub optimal dental health, incomplete childhood immunisations and poor emotional health with an increase in risky behaviours.

The Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well Being of Looked After Children (2009) gives guidance to local authorities and their Children's Trust partners in order to ensure :-

- the promotion of co-operation to improve the well-being of children and young people
- the making of arrangements to ensure that they take account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when doing their jobs.

The aim of the guidance is to make sure that all looked after children and young people are physically, mentally, emotionally and sexually healthy, that they will not take illegal drugs and that they will enjoy healthy lifestyles

In line with the Statutory Guidance the IOW NHS Trust (Provider Trust) has a Designated and Named Nurse with specific responsibility for the health needs of Children in Care.

Working in partnership with social care colleagues and other agencies the Children in Care Nurse coordinates the individualised health input for children placed in care, both on or off the Island, who remain the responsibility of the Isle of Wight Council.

5.11 EDUCATION

Working with our virtual school we are ensuring that education attainment for all our children in care receives highest priority and we aim to narrow the gap between the achievements of children who are not in care and those who are. We are also committed to ensuring that all children in care are able to fulfil their potential.

We commissioned Challenge and Adventure to run one of their wilderness challenges for a group of young people in care. This 12 week programme culminated in a 2 week hike and kayak ride across Scotland and was supported by our social care educational professionals. Pre and post evaluation demonstrated increased levels of confidence, positive behaviours and attendance at school and self-reported benefits from the young people involved. Challenge and Adventure hosted an awards ceremony to celebrate the achievements of these young people with their foster carers, friends, parents, teachers and families.

This evidence was used to help schools understand how they could spend their pupil premium for children in care in innovative ways that helps them be ready to learn in the classroom. Our virtual head teacher oversees each personal education plan to

ensure the pupil premium is being invested in ways that improves the learning and attainment of children and young people in care.

Our looked after children's nurse supports the health of all children and young people in care and works closely with our social care teams and social care educational professionals, school nurses, our child and adolescent mental health service and voluntary providers, our virtual head teacher and our Choices education participation team.

We have created five apprenticeships for young people in care within the Isle of Wight Council and our providers again supported by the social care educational professionals for which they have been nominated for a staff award. We are planning to create more apprenticeships to ensure young people remain in school, or access education, training or employment along with the raising of the participation age.

Looked after young people are trained and are always involved in the appointment of social workers following the "Involving Young People in Interviews" so they have a say in who works for them.

5.12 THE EXPERIENCES AND PROGRESS OF CARE LEAVERS

Young people leaving care and preparing to leave care receive support and help to assist them in making a successful transition to adulthood. Plans for them to leave care are effective and address their individual needs. They are safe and feel safe, particularly where they live. Young people acquire the necessary level of skill and emotional resilience to successfully move towards independence. They are able to successfully access education, employment, training and safe housing. They enjoy stable and enduring relationships with staff and carers who meet their needs.

We recognise that young people in placement should remain with their carers beyond 18 years old if that is the best decision for them. We have a "Staying Put Policy" that enables young people to remain with their carers beyond their 18th birthday. We have redesigned our youth services to focus on meeting the needs of children in care from their 16th birthday by providing an independent personal advisors who will work alongside the social worker until the young person reached 18 years old, when the team will assume full responsibility for supporting the care leavers.

The Isle of Wight is also committed to a range of activities to ensure that all our children in care are able to access education, employment and training. As one of the county's largest employers we are committed to ensuring there are work based opportunities for young people leaving care.

The Isle of Wight Council commits to ensure that the experiences and progress of care leavers are good to outstanding. In that:

- Care leavers are safe and feel safe, particularly where they are living, and are helped to understand how their life choices will affect their safety and well-

being. Any risks associated with offending, drug or alcohol misuse, going missing or with sexual exploitation are known by adults who have a responsibility for them and effective plans are in place to reduce the risk of or actual harm to them. Care leavers are supported to take responsibility for their behaviour.

- Pathway planning is effective and plans (including transition planning for looked after children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities) address all young people's needs and are updated as circumstances change.
- The health needs of care leavers are clearly assessed, prioritised and met. Child and adolescent mental health services, adult mental health provision, therapeutic help and services for learning or physically disabled young people and adults are available when they are needed.
- Care leavers have access to and understand their full health history and are provided with all key documents they need to begin their lives as young adults, for example national insurance numbers, birth certificates and passports.
- Care leavers develop the skills and confidence they need to maximise their chances of successful maturity to adulthood, including parenthood. This includes learning to budget, to live independently and to manage safe relationships and behaviour.
- Care leavers form and maintain relationships with carers and staff from the local authority and develop supportive relationships within the community, including where appropriate contact with family and friends. They are confident that the local authority will act as a reasonable parent in supporting their transition into adulthood and providing practical, emotional and financial support until they are at least 21 and, where necessary, until they are 25. This will include the availability of a trusted and known adult (for example, the allocated personal adviser or their social worker) to support them.
- Care leavers succeed in their transition to greater independence and adulthood at a time that is right for them. Young people aged 16 and 17 are encouraged to remain looked after until their 18th birthday where (and this will usually be the case) this is in their best interest. They can remain in placements beyond their 18th birthday or, where more appropriate, live in permanent and affordable accommodation that meets their needs and those of their children, where relevant.
- Care leavers have access to appropriate education and employment opportunities, including work experience and apprenticeships. They are encouraged and supported to continue their education and training, including those aged 21 to 24 years. Care leavers are progressing well and achieving

their full potential through life choices, either in their attainment in further and higher education or in their chosen career/occupation.

- Care leavers are positive about themselves. Their achievements are celebrated and the local authority shows they are positive and proud of their care leavers.
- Care leavers are helped to find housing solutions that best meet their needs. Risks of tenancy breakdown are identified and alternative plans are in place.
- Accommodation for care leavers is appropriate for each young person to safely develop their independence skills. Houses of multiple occupancy are only used when it is a young person's preferred option and it can demonstrably be shown to be in their best interests.
- Care leavers are provided with information (including through the care leaver's pledge) about their legal entitlements such as access to their records, assistance to find employment (including work experience), training, financial support and how to complain where necessary supported by an advocate.
- That professional practice exceeds the standard of 'good' and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children, young people and their families. The local authority is ambitious and aspirational for its young people as they mature to adulthood. The
- As the local authority we are assertive and proactive in keeping in touch with all young people who have left care and, as a result, young people have a sense of security and connection with adults who they know well.
- We use research-informed practice, some of which will be innovative, to continue to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of children and young people.

5.13 Children in Care who are at risk of entered, or who have already entered, the criminal justice system:

At all times, a preventative approach will be adopted by the Local Authority to utilise early help services (outlined above) where a child in care is identified as being at risk of offending (or re-offending) with a view to avoiding them entering (or re-entering) the youth justice system. These approaches will include consideration of local, regional and national developments in relation to this group which are known to experience potentially the most negative of outcomes in relation to future life achievement.

Where those measures are not successful in diverting children in care away from legal sanction, close liaison with the Youth Offending Team (YOT) will take place to ensure any resulting interventions and/or plans are communicated clearly to the child, their parents/carers and other professionals and are clearly matched with other plans which may already be in place. This may include joint delivery of interventions where deemed appropriate, and should also consider exit strategies to address offending behaviour and/or maintain desistance once Youth Offending Team involvement has ended.

The Local Authority will strengthen local links with its YOT and build clear pathways for joint working in relation to children who have been received into care and are known to the YOT, paying particular attention to those who are placed out of the area or who experience youth to adult transitions during the period of involvement (and therefore may receive support or supervision from a variety of services which require enhanced co-ordination). Additionally, processes for children who are received into care via criminal remand, or receive a custodial sentence whilst already in care, will be strengthened to ensure a robust response to both risk and need is adopted within a joint-working framework on a child by child basis.

6 HOW WILL WE KNOW IF WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL?

We will know if our strategy for children in care has been successful by triangulating evidence from a number of sources which will enable us to 'fix a position' which the evidence points to and thus charts our success.

Feedback from children and young people

It is important that children and young people are able to tell us about their experiences of the care system, whether they have experienced any improvement and what needs to change. Our Children's Rights and Participation Officer is revising the Isle of Wight participation strategy as an integral component to our new children and young people's plan. He works out of our Newport Youth Café with a dedicated space and training room for looked after children and young people. He regularly organises "Have Your Say Days" for children in care to meet senior managers and supports children in care and care leavers to attend national conferences and Westminster briefings with Government Ministers.

The Children in Care Council and Care Leavers fora are important groups to ask, consult and involve children and young people. Our Children's Rights and Participation Officer is exploring how best to develop a group for children and young people who are subject to child protection plans.

Our teams including our early help offer using the common assessment framework are using the distance travelled tool to determine the impact, outcome and experience for children and young people who receive support.

Feedback from professionals

An audit has been developed specifically to provide evidence of the voice and experience of children and young people in care together with feedback from practitioners who are engaged in direct work with children in care to identify what is working well and what may need improvement.

Quality Assurance

A continuous process of audit, feedback and progress checking is being implemented and will be continue and be improved. In addition, peer reviews of each team area will be implemented and managers required to have a service and team plan in place. These plans will connect to the performance management of services and be actively used in team meetings and supervisions to drive improvements.

Performance data

A range of performance data will be collected and analysed via the performance management arrangements of the Isle of Wight Council. Performance targets for improvement will be set and used to provide evidence of continuous service improvement. The successful implementation of the Children in Care Strategy will be measured as part of the effective delivery of the improvement board action plan that demonstrated impacts on service improvement and better outcomes for children. The Children in Care Strategy will also inform our ongoing self-assessment using the new Ofsted Framework for Inspection.

Appendix A:

Links to all the relevant policies and procedures

[R:\Childrens Services\IOW & HAMPSHIRE C&F DOCUMENTS](#)

ANNEX: USEFUL ORGANISATIONS AND INFORMATION

Action for Prisoners' Families Works to reduce the negative impact of imprisonment on prisoners' families. Produces publications and resources, and provides advice, information and training as well as networking opportunities. www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk Address: Unit 21, Carlson Court 116 Putney Bridge Road London, SW15 2NQ Tel: 020 8812 3600 E-mail: info@actionpf.org.uk Advice line: 0808 808 2003 info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.org.uk

Addaction Offers a range of support developed for families and carers affected by substance misuse. www.addaction.org.uk Address: 67-69 Cowcross Street London EC1M 6PU Tel. 020 7251 5860 Email: info@addaction.org.uk

Adfam Works with families affected by drugs and alcohol, and supports carers of children whose parents have drug and alcohol problems. www.adfam.org.uk Address: 25 Corsham Street, London N1 6DR Tel: 020 7553 7640 Email: admin@adfam.org.uk

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) Offers free independent advice and information for parents and carers on a range of state education and schooling issues, including admissions, exclusion, attendance, special educational needs and bullying. www.ace-ed.org.uk Address: 1c Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2DQ General advice line: 0808 800 5793 Exclusion advice line: 0808 800 0327 Exclusion information line: 020 7704 9822 (24hr answer phone)

BeGrand.net Website offering information and advice to grandparents, plus online and telephone advice. www.begrand.net Helpline: 0845 434 6835

British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Provides information and advice about adoption and fostering and publishes resources. www.baaf.org.uk Address: Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS Tel: 020 7421 2600 Email: mail@baaf.org.uk

Children's Legal Centre Provides free independent legal advice and factsheets to children, parents, carers and professionals. www.childrenslegalcentre.com Address: University of Essex Wivenhoe Park Colchester Essex CO4 3SQ Tel: 01206 877 910 E-mail: clc@essex.ac.uk

Child Law Advice Line: 0808 802 0008 Community Legal Advice - Education: 0845 345 4345

Citizens Advice Bureaux Helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice through local bureaux and website. www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Department for Education Lists details of telephone help lines and online services to provide information, advice and support on a range of issues that parents and

families may face in bringing up children and young people.
www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families

Family Fund Trust Helps families with severely disabled or seriously ill children to have choices and the opportunity to enjoy ordinary life. Gives grants for things that make life easier and more enjoyable for the disabled child and their family. Address: 4 Alpha Court Monks Cross Drive York YO32 9WN www.familyfund.org.uk Tel: 0845 130 4542 Email: info@familyfund.org.uk

Family Rights Group (FGR) Provides advice to parents and other family members whose children are involved with or require children's social care services because of welfare needs or concerns. Publishes resources, helps to develop support groups for family and friends carers, and runs a discussion board. www.frg.org.uk Address: Second Floor The Print House 18 Ashwin Street London E8 3DL Tel: 020 7923 2628 Advice line: 0800 801 0366 Email: advice@frg.org.uk

Family Information Zone (FIZ) provides local advice and information to parents. 11 Orchard Street Newport **Isle of Wight** PO30 1JZ Telephone: 01983 821999.

The Fostering Network Supports foster carers and anyone with an interest in fostering to improve the lives of children in care. Publishes resources and runs Fosterline, a confidential advice line for foster carers including concerns about a child's future, allegations and complaints, legislation and financial matters. www.fostering.net Address: 87 Blackfriars Road London SE1 8HA Email: info@fostering.net Tel: 020 7620 6400 Fosterline: 0800 040 7675 Email: fosterline@fostering.net

The Grandparents' Association Supports grandparents and their families, especially those who have lost or are losing contact with their grandchildren because of divorce, separation or other family problems, those caring for their grandchildren on a full-time basis, and those with childcare responsibilities for their grandchildren. www.grandparents-association.org.uk Address: Moot House The Stow Harlow Essex CM20 3AG Tel: 01279 428040 Helpline: 0845 434 9585 Welfare benefits advice and information: 0844 357 1033 Email: info@grandparents-association.org.uk

Grandparents Plus Champions the role of grandparents and the wider family in children's lives, especially when they take on the caring role in difficult family circumstances. Address: Grandparents Plus 18 Victoria Park Square Bethnal Green London E2 9PF Tel: 020 8981 8001 Email: info@grandparentsplus.org.uk

Mentor UK Promotes the health and wellbeing of children and young people to reduce the damage that drugs can do to lives. www.mentoruk.org.uk Address: Fourth Floor 74 Great Eastern Street London EC2A 3JG Tel: 020 7739 8494 Email: admin@mentoruk.org

Family Mediation Helpline Provides information and advice about family mediation services and eligibility for public funding. 08456 026627
www.familymediationhelpline.co.uk

National Family Mediation (NFM) Provides mediation services to support couples who are separated, and their children and others affected by this. www.nfm.org.uk 4 Barnfield Hill, Exeter EX1 1SR. 0300 4000 636 general@nfm.org.uk

Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group Operates helpline and provides a variety of services to support anyone who has a link with someone in prison, prisoners and other agencies. www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk Address: Valentine House 1079 Rochdale Road Blackley Manchester M9 8AJ Tel: 0161 702 1000 Offenders' Families Helpline Tel: 0808 808 2003 Email: info@prisonersfamilieshelpline.co.uk

Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) Provides practical and emotional support to prisoners and to their children and families. The Kinship Care Support Service provides support and advice to family members and friends who care for children whose parents are in HMP Holloway. www.prisonadvice.org.uk Address: Park Place 12 Lawn Lane Vauxhall London SW8 1UD Telephone: 020 77359535 55

Parents Against Drug Abuse (PADA) Delivers support and services to the families of substance users, including a national helpline. www.pada.org.uk Address: The Foundry Marcus Street Birkenhead CH41 1EU Phone: 0151 649 1580 National Families Helpline: 08457 023867

Parentline Plus Provides help and support in all aspects of family life, including information, an online chat facility and a 24 hour helpline. www.familylives.org.uk Address: CAN Mezzanine 49-51 East Road London N1 6AH Tel: 020 7553 3080 24hr Advice line: 0808 800 2222 Email: parentsupport@familylives.org.uk

TalktoFrank The government's national drugs helpline which offers free confidential drugs information and advice 24 hours a day. Information and advice is also available via the website. www.talktofrank.com 24 hour advice line: 0800 77 66 00 Text: 82111 Email: frank@talktofrank.com

Voice Advocacy organisation for children living away from home or in need. www.voiceyp.org Address: 320 City Road London EC1V 2NZ Tel: 020 7833 5792 Young person's advice line: 0808 800 5792 Email: info@voiceyp.org

Young Minds Works to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people and empowering their parents and carers. www.youngminds.org.uk Address: 48-50 St John Street London EC1M 4DG Tel: 020 7336 8445 Parents helpline: 0808 802 5544