CARE LEAVER STRATEGY
August 2016 - March 2020

Working in partnership for children, young people & families
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Introduction

Welcome to the Bournemouth’s Children’s Trust Care Leaver Strategy. This strategy relates to young people who are preparing to leave care between the ages of 16 and 17, or who have left care and continue to require services between the ages of 16 and 25.

We believe that everyone in society has a responsibility to help those who have been in care to overcome the difficulties that they experienced in their childhoods, so that they can lead successful lives. More than anything else we recognise that the local help and support that Care Leavers receive from the local authority leaving care team is critical to whether Care Leavers make the transition from care to independence successfully.

For our Looked After Children and Care Leavers we strive to be excellent Corporate Parents, having high aspirations for them and encouraging them to achieve their goals and potential. We do this by creating a culture where all professionals working with Care Leavers share our high aspirations and ensure that our Looked After Children and Care Leavers have all the opportunities we would give our own children through good access to high quality education, health and social care services.

The Strategy focuses on how we are going to work across the partnership to meet the needs of Care Leavers. The strategy also identifies how we are promoting better outcomes for Care Leavers by ensuring that they achieve a sense of belonging and stability, and have a champion within the council who supports this at a strategic level.

We recognise this is only the start of the journey. It will be the delivery of this strategy in real terms that will make the difference to the lives of Care Leavers. To deliver our strategy requires coordinated and sustained effort across our partners to continue to improve service standards and everyday practice, as well as meet the challenges that the demographic and economic landscape brings.

As national and local policy develops, and the needs of Care Leavers change, this strategy will be reviewed and refreshed. This strategy is therefore a working document that will evolve and grow to meet the ever-changing needs of Care Leavers in Bournemouth.

(When the words ‘we’ and ‘our’ are used in this strategy it refers to Children’s Trust Partners).
Our Mission, Vision and Principles

Bournemouth’s Children’s Trust brings together local partners with a role in improving outcomes for children to agree a common strategy on how we will cooperate to improve children’s wellbeing and to help embed partnership in partners’ routine delivery of their own functions.

Our Children’s Trust is committed to delivering effective services that ensure children and young people are safe and their welfare is secured through effective commissioning processes.

We are proud of our achievements in recent years but recognise there remain a number of key challenges and areas for improvement. We have built strong and effective partnerships and laid down the foundations to secure improvements by working together. We remain committed to improving the outcomes for children, young people and their families and want to help them to build a better life for themselves.

Bournemouth’s Plan for Children Young People and their Families sets out our shared ambition and our commitment to improving outcomes for all children and young people in Bournemouth, and those in our care who live outside the area.

Our Mission

In all areas of our Care Leaver strategy we remain committed to the mission and vision of the Children’s Trust:

‘To secure outstanding quality services to children, young people and their families so that they have the best possible start in life.’

Our Vision

That all children and young people in Bournemouth:

- feel they are cared for and that they are safe and secure.
- are healthy, happy and free from poverty.
- receive a good education that allows them to fulfil their potential and achieve their ambitions.
- are well prepared for adulthood and the world of work, making a positive contribution as active members of their communities

Hearing and listening to the voices of children, young people and their families is essential in us moving forward with our partners to realise our ambitions.
For the children in, and who have left our care our ambition is for them to have the best possible life experience. We want them to be safe, happy, healthy, to have economic security, to have ambitions, to look forward to a positive future and to reach their full potential in their work and personal lives.

Corporate Parents

We aim to provide the best help, support and opportunities for young people when they leave care. We are confident in our ability to deliver improvements necessary to meet our responsibilities as good and effective corporate parents to Care Leavers. We want the children and young people we act as Corporate Parent for to have everything that good parents want for their children, and to get the same level of care and support that other young people get from their parents, and to act as a good parent would act. We also treat Care Leavers with respect and dignity by understanding their experiences and listening to their voices.

There is recognition that the corporate parenting duty is ongoing and extends to young people who have left care up to the age of 25. The Bournemouth Corporate Parenting Panel recognise that to be good corporate parents they need to put children and young people first, be powerful advocates for them to receive the best services and opportunities and to help them make a success of their lives. The panel’s purpose is to ensure that the Council is carrying out its responsibilities as a good corporate parent across all Directorates to meet the needs of the children and young people in their care who are leaving or who have left care.

Our Corporate Parenting Panel acts as the strategic leadership forum to ensure that Council services are conscious of the wishes and needs of Looked After Children and Care Leavers, and the particular risks and challenges they face and take these into account when providing and planning services. Specifically, through listening and engaging with Looked After Children the panel will:

- take a strategic overview of key themes affecting the lives of Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- raise the profile of the needs of Looked After Children and Care Leavers through a range of actions that are reflected in key plans, policies and strategies
- improve the life chances of Looked After Children in line with their peers, and to encourage, protect and support them in order that they grow up to contribute and participate as healthy citizens within their community
- ensure that services provided to Looked After Children and Care Leavers are of a high standard in order that they are empowered to build their adult lives and be constructive and productive members of society.
The National Context

The Bournemouth Care Leaver strategy sits within a national and local context, is determined and driven by legislation and guidance, and aligns with other strategies and plans of our partner agencies, and local Boards. We all share a common aim of trying to improve the lives of the people of Bournemouth.

The legislation and policies which primarily impact on Care Leavers and Care Leaver services that have influenced the development of the strategy are as follows:

- Children Act (1989)
- Raising Participation Age (2013)
- Care Leavers Strategy (2013)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013)
- Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (2013)
- The Children and Families Act (2014) amends section 22 of the Children Act (1989) to require every local authority in England to appoint an officer employed by the authority, or another authority, to make sure that its duty to promote the educational achievement of its Looked After Children is properly discharged. That officer is referred to as the Virtual School Head (VSH).
- Care Act (2014)
- Promoting the education of Looked After Children - Statutory guidance for local authorities (2014)
- Children and Families Act (2014)
- Future in mind - promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing (2015)
- promoting the health and wellbeing of Looked After Children (2015)
- Children’s social care reform: a vision for change (2016)
- Putting children first: delivering our vision for excellent children’s social care (2016)
- Keep on Caring - Supporting Young People from Care to Independence (2016)
- Rights of the Child - European Commission - encouraging the right to a family life
- In Care, Out of Trouble (2016) Lord Laming report on behalf of the Prison Reform Trust
- Pan Dorset Protocol to Reduce Criminalisation of Children and Young People in Care
Who are Care Leavers?

A Care Leaver is someone who has spent time in the care of the Local Authority.

The following young people, who are statutorily entitled to support, are part of this group:

- Eligible - children aged 16-17 who are still in care, and who have been in care for 13 weeks or more from the age of 14, and have been in care at some point when they were between the ages of 16 and 17.
- Relevant - children aged between 16 and 17 who have left care. This category of Care Leaver also includes children who are detained in institutions such as prisons or hospitals.
- Former Relevant - young people who are between the ages of 18 and 21 and who were previously eligible and/or relevant, and who are entitled to ongoing support to enable their successful transition to independence.
- Young people aged between the ages of 21 and 25 and who were previously eligible and/or relevant, who are in education training or employment and who wish to receive an ongoing service.

National Profile of Care Leavers

- Around 10,800 young people left care in England aged 16 or over in the year ending March 2015, in increase of over 40% in the last decade
- There are an increasing number of young people who enter care in England aged 16 or over, accounting for 16% of all those who entered care in the year ending March 2015, compared to 12% in the year ending March 2011
- 16 and 17 year olds who represent as homeless also become Looked After Children - and later Care Leavers
- Local authorities are looking after increasing numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and supporting more Care Leavers who are former UASC
Care Leavers’ Outcomes

Care Leavers’ outcomes are not determined solely by the quality of leaving care support they receive - although this is clearly an important factor. Experiences before and during care are also important determinants of their outcomes, which means that comparison between the outcomes of Care Leavers and other young people in the general population are of only limited value when making judgements about the equality and impact of the support that is provided when young people leave care.

- The following are some of the lasting impacts of the events and circumstances of children taken into care
  - around 60% of children in care for 12 months have Special Educational Needs, compared to 15% in the general population
  - around half of children in care have a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire score that is borderline or cause for concern
  - only 14% of children in care achieved 5 good GCSEs, compared to 53% of non-looked after children
  - leaving school with few qualifications adversely affects Care Leavers’ progress into further or higher education, apprenticeships or skilled jobs.

In the year ending March 2015:

- local authorities were in touch with, and able to provide data to the Department of Education, on 88% of Care Leavers (an increase from 84% in the year ending March 2014)
- 39% of 19-21-year-old Care Leavers were not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
  - of these over a third were NEET due to either a disability, or because they were a young parent
- 6% of 19-21-year-old Care Leavers were in Higher Education; 18% were in other types of accommodation
- 23% were in employment or training, an increase of 3% percentage points on the previous year

Research consistently shows that Care Leavers are over-represented in studies on people in custody, homelessness and other negative outcomes.

Children who ceased to be looked after in 2015

- Since 2011 the numbers of discharges from care in England has risen by 15%. In 2015 the number was 31,100.
- The numbers of discharges from care continued to rise due to adoption, Special Guardianship Orders being granted, residence orders, or child arrangement orders.
The reasons behind children ceasing to be looked are:
- 10,620 returned home to live with parents or relatives
- 8,100 returned home to parents or others with parental responsibility as part of the care planning process
- 1710 not as part of the care planning process
- the rest returned home to live with parents, relatives or other persons without parental responsibility
- 15,410 had been looked after under a voluntary agreement.

The Local Context

Population

Demographic Overview
Bournemouth has a resident population of 191,400 (Mid-2014 Estimate).
Nearly 16% of the resident population is aged under 16 (30,500) and a further 3% (5,800) are aged 16 to 18.

The percentage of under-16s is lower than England and Wales (19%), the proportion of 16-18 year olds is also smaller than England and Wales (4%). It should be noted that these figures may include a small number of non-dependent children, particularly those attending Bournemouth’s two universities.
At the time of the 2011 Census there were 32,006 dependent children in Bournemouth (17% of the total population). This compares with 18% in Dorset, 20% in Poole and 22% in England and Wales.
According to the short-term sub-national population projections produced by ONS (2012 based) the number of 0-15 year olds is expected to increase by just over 16% between 2012 and 2022. In contrast to this, the increase in England over the same period is just over 9%.
Since 2007 the overall number of births has exceeded the number of deaths, reversing the previous long term trend.

Bournemouth Story

- The 0-17 children population of Bournemouth is estimated to increase by 12% by 2021
Care Leavers in Bournemouth

Recent Performance
The Ofsted inspection of children in need of help and protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers (April / May 2014) assessed Bournemouth Borough Council as requiring improvement. In relation to Care Leavers the priority improvement areas identified were to improve pathway planning, to consider all of their needs and aspirations and to ensure that they receive the right help to achieve them. An Ofsted Action Plan (Bournemouth’s Service Improvement Plan) commenced in October 2014.

Leaving Care
The proportion of children and young people leaving care to return home is high in Bournemouth. Here we see a third more children and young people leaving care and returning home than the national average.

Our teams are working with young people who are in care to plan for their leaving care either by reunification with their families or onto a Special Guardianship Order.

We recognise that we need to strengthen our focus on permanency, increase the number of children leaving care and reduce the amount of time children spend in the care system. This means ensuring those who can return home do so as soon as it is safe, and that families are supported to build the capacity to keep children safe, reducing the risk of returning to care. Thirdly we have to rigorously and thoroughly case manage every child and young person in the care system to ensure that their needs are met, and early opportunities are taken to help them return to their families. Fourthly for those children who cannot return home, it means finding a suitable permanent home without unnecessary delay.

Raising aspirations
However, significant improvement plans are underway, such as extension to the virtual school, restructure of the Care Leavers service and multiagency arrangements. There are already more young people making plans for university and other higher education establishments.
The Virtual School has been extended to include two additional permanent posts: A Post-16 LAC & Care Leavers Education Lead and a Post-16 LAC & Care Leaver Education Caseworker. This means that Post-16 LAC & Care Leavers now receive targeted support with their education, employment and training options up to the age of 25.

There are currently 11 Care Leavers studying in higher education 16/17 and those aspiring to higher education, both LAC and Care Leavers, have been identified and are being supported to achieve their aim.

**The Strategy**

Our strategy sets out how we will deliver good and effective corporate parenting for children and young people leaving care and is built on the commitment across the partner agencies in Bournemouth to ensure that the life chances of every child and young person leaving our care are maximised, through tackling disadvantage to reach their full potential. The aim of the strategy is to ensure that Care Leavers in Bournemouth are treated with respect and dignity and have the same expectations of care and support that other young people get from their parents, in order for them to realise their aspirations. This strategy will underpin improvements in outcomes for children and young people and enable budgetary pressures around the expenditure of Care Leavers to be managed successfully.

The commitments made in this strategy will also underpin the development of our local offer to Care Leavers, which we will consult on and then publish by March 2017. This offer will ensure that every Bournemouth Care Leaver will be aware of the support they can expect. Included will be legal entitlements, our ‘Staying Put’ policy, services that the leaving care team provide. And set out how relevant universal services could support Care Leavers’ transition to adulthood, such as careers advice services. Through the publishing of local offers across the country we will learn about services that are being provided in other areas. This strategy aligns with the Plan for Children, Young People and their Families sharing the 3 main priority areas are expressed through ambitions as set out below.
## Improving prospects - reaching potential

| All children have the best possible start in life |
| Children, young people and families are resilient when faced with challenges |
| All children and young people receive a good education that allows them to fulfil their potential and achieve their ambitions |
| All young people are well prepared for adulthood and the world of work, making a positive contribution as active members of their communities |

## Keeping safe and well - enjoying good physical and mental health, and living a healthy lifestyle

| Children grow up healthy and happy, choosing positive lifestyles |
| Children are safe from harm, neglect and exploitation |
| Children in Bournemouth enjoy good mental health and emotional wellbeing |

## Tackling inequalities - improving life chances

| Looked After Children and Care Leavers receive high quality support to enable them to achieve better outcomes |
| All children are healthy and free from poverty |
| Children and young people enjoy living arrangements that are stable and permanent |
| All children feel they are cared for and that they are safe and secure |

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**All children and young people receive a good education that allows them to fulfil their potential and achieve their ambitions**

### What do we know?

It has been recognised for some time that the national picture is of children and young people who are looked after achieving poor outcomes in their education.

### What are we going to do about it?

Outcome - all children in Bournemouth have a high quality education
Not all Looked After Children will achieve 5 A-C GCSEs when they are 16 years old.

It is generally accepted that a good standard of education is a key driver towards achieving positive employment outcomes in adult life. However nationally there remains a significant gap between the educational achievements of Care Leavers and their peers.

For many Care Leavers, their progression route from school will be to a further education (FE) college, and Care Leavers are a priority group for financial support through the 16-19 Bursary Fund and any other financial assistance individual institutions are able to provide to assist Care Leavers.

We know that many Care Leavers’ lives begin to become more settled when they reach their late teens and early twenties and it is only at this point that they feel ready to return to education and catch up on what they may have missed out on when they were younger.

Care Leavers receive support from a local authority Personal Adviser to age 21, who helps the Care Leaver make the transition to independence using a ‘pathway plan’ to identify the steps that need to be taken to achieve their goals, and how the local authority will support them to do so. If a Care Leaver remains in or returns to education, support from their Personal Adviser continues up to age 25.

We want to help all Care Leavers to reach their full potential, whether that is going to college or university, taking up an apprenticeship or getting a skilled job.

In Bournemouth we will:

- Continuously ensure that all our Pre-16 Looked After Children have access to the best possible full time education provision, developing creative solutions to this where needed. This approach will carry on with our support for Post-16 Looked After Children and Care Leavers in securing good education, employment and training placements.
- Expand the role of our Virtual School in supporting young people to the age of 25 through the appointment of a Post-16 years old Education Lead and a Post-16 years old Education Caseworker.
  - These posts will focus on ensuring that Post-16-year-old Looked After Children and Care Leavers are engaged in Education, Employment and Training (EET).
  - The Virtual School will identify, monitor and support those at risk of not being engaged in Education, Employment and Training (NEET).
  - Education Caseworkers will liaise with educational establishments, employers and training providers to put in place an appropriate Personal Education, Employment and Training Plan for Post-16 Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
- Work with the 14-19 Team, Integrated Youth Services and other agencies to improve Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG).
- Liaise with various stakeholders to secure the voice of young people and ensure that it has an impact.
Provide support to year 11 Looked After Children at this key transition to ensure they attain the best possible outcomes in their year 11 exams.

Ensure all Care Leavers have a Personal Education, Employment and Training Plan in place and that, in partnership, it is aligned with the Pathways Plans. This has become an established document called Next Steps, which was designed in conjunction with the CLICK group. All Post-16 LAC & Care Leavers, who are in full time education, have two Next Steps Reviews a year and when they turn 18 this document feeds into the Pathway Plan.

Ensure all Care Leavers who want to apply to higher education are encouraged to do so and are given personal assistance to attend college and university open days, research appropriate courses and complete their UCAS application. Links with local universities mean that Care Leavers are offered individual tours of the campus and meetings with key members of staff, both academic and pastoral as well as Student Ambassadors.

To ensure that all Care Leavers are linked into Higher Education packages of support including Pastoral Care and access to Higher Education bursaries.

Help Care Leavers know where to find information about what courses are available to them and their progression routes and sources of financial support.

A formal tracking process is in place to ensure Care Leavers in danger of becoming NEET are identified and worked put in place to ensure they remain in EET.

**Training**

Training in Bournemouth will:

- Offer more opportunities for work experience within Bournemouth Borough Council. Developments are underway to offer a Traineeship for LAC & Care Leavers with Bournemouth
Borough Council. Apprenticeships have been available for some time and there are currently a number LAC & Care Leavers on apprenticeships with the Council and the Council is also able to offer work experience placements.

- Train Care Leavers to peer mentor Looked After Children as they begin to prepare for independent life involving Care Leavers who have achieved success in their lives, delivering workshops where they can share experiences and ideas as to how to overcome obstacles.
- Create a peer support group for Care Leavers.
- Support Care Leavers to remain in their placements until the end of the academic year after a young person’s 18th birthday if they are in education or training, to avoid disruption at this critical point in their learning.

All young people are well prepared for adulthood and the world of work, making a positive contribution as active members of their community

What do we know?

National Research tells us that Care Leavers do not always have the support of family to fall back on when having to meet the challenge of independent living at a much younger age than their peers. Care Leavers say that they find it difficult to navigate services and work out what financial support they are entitled to.

Care Leavers talk about not being sufficiently prepared for the realities of living independently. In particular, they refer to the problems they have in making ends meet. Paying rent, Council tax, household bills and transport costs means that many Care Leavers

- What are we going to do about it?
- Outcome - young adults are ready for life and work

- To improve the experience of Bournemouth’s young people transitioning into adulthood we will: -
- Raise our aspirations for what our Care Leavers can achieve, helping them to access new opportunities and experiences that inspire them to set ambitious goals for themselves.
- Listen and hear the voices of our Looked After Children and Care Leavers through our Click and Respect groups to influence the development of services into the future.
have difficulty managing their finances and can go on to experience debt and arrears.

As part of Care Leavers’ preparation for independence it is important that Personal Advisors make those in receipt of benefits aware of what they need to do to continue to receive them.

Many Care Leavers are not able to access advice about their personal finances from parents or family members in the same way that other young people can - from budgeting to paying bills on time.

Work provides a structure, a sense of purpose, progress, achievement, self-confidence and personal responsibility. The National picture tells us that too many Care Leavers are not in education, employment or training or are long term unemployed.

- Ensure that Care Leavers are knowledgeable about their entitlements, through the Local Authority website, the Care Leavers Charter and comprehensive guides to leaving care.
- Build on our responsibilities as corporate parents to maximise employment opportunities for all Care Leavers through the ‘Open Doors’ programme, and fully prepare Care Leavers for work.
- Ensure that Pathway Plans focus on creating opportunities for sustainable independence for living, education and employment.
- Work closely with colleagues in Housing Services to achieve their strategic aims in supporting young people in housing.
- Work with housing colleagues and other providers to improve housing choices.
- Provide a setting up home grant at the point when a Looked After Child leaves care. This will enable them to furnish their first property.
- Ensure that Personal Advisors are equipped to offer Care Leavers good quality information about accessing and managing their money - from Higher Education Bursaries to benefits.
- Work to find new ways of increasing opportunities for children in or leaving care to take up apprenticeships, traineeships or supported internships and short term work experience.
- Work with the local business community to create additional employment opportunities for Care Leavers, and offer ongoing support to the Care Leaver and their employer to make the employment a success.
- Develop an effective protocol between the local authority leaving care teams and local jobcentre plus offices to help Care Leavers understand the conditions around receipt of
benefits and ensure that they retain entitlement to benefit (including elements to meet housing costs).

- Ensure that Care Leavers aged 18 who receive a sanction obtain hardship payments should they qualify
- Look to develop an innovative initiative with the Department of Work and Pensions to provide targeted support to Care Leavers.

Keeping safe and well - being healthy, safe and active

Children grow up health and happy, choosing positive lifestyles

What do we know?

Generally, Care Leavers are recognised as having greater mental health needs than those of the general population of the same age. Care Leavers frequently say that they encounter a lack of support in accessing appropriate health services and that professionals working close to them, do not have an understanding of their needs, particularly in respect of their emotional and mental health.

It is recognised that making the transition from being in care to living independently at a young age can be particularly challenging for Care Leavers who are receiving support to improve their emotional health and wellbeing, as it often coincides with a transition from CAMHS to adult mental health services.

At national consultation events Care Leavers reported a range of situations where they experienced poor emotional health and wellbeing and failed to get the support that they needed. For most this was linked to loneliness and isolation, causing them to feel depressed, anxious or to have a lack of confidence. Some Care

What are we going to do about it?

Outcome - children and young people have healthy lifestyles

In Bournemouth we will: -

Follow through the actions outlined in our Local Transformation Plans for child and adolescent mental health, to improve the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people in our area, and support those with mental health problems, across the whole care pathway.

Provide any Care Leaver who is at increased risk of substance misuse with targeted prevention support, which focuses on reducing risks and strengthening resilience.

Develop clear pathways into specialist substance misuse services for young people who are assessed as requiring structured drug and alcohol interventions.
Leavers reported more serious cases of committing self-harm, suicidal thoughts or more serious personality disorders. Older Care Leavers reported particular problems accessing adult services, due to the higher thresholds.

Nationally a third of young people leaving care report problems with drugs or alcohol a year later; indeed, young women leaving care are particularly susceptible to problematic substance use.

Nationally a quarter of young women leaving care are pregnant, and nearly half become pregnant within 18 to 24 months.

Identify, as part of the Healthy Child Programme, where families need additional support. Where one or both parents are known to have grown up in care and are more likely to experience additional problems.

Adapt and strengthen the offer of the Family Nurse Partnership to provide more flexibility to tailor interventions to meet the needs of any teenage mothers who have a care background.

In addition:

- The Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have recognised the need to support Looked After Children 16 years plus and Care Leavers, responding by increasing resources to provide an additional nurse to work with the 16 plus and Care Leavers in supporting their physical, emotional and mental health issues.

- The Designated Nurse and Doctor will support the Specialist Looked After Children Health Team. This will enable enhanced partnership working to ensure initial and review health assessments are completed within the statutory time frame. It will also meet the health needs of Looked After Children over the age of 16 and Care Leavers.

- The CCG will commence transition work earlier (15yrs) in consultation with health to ensure an informed and smooth transition to adult health provision if required. Young people will be at the heart of the decision making process and be clear about expectations.

- We will ensure all young people aged 16 and over have been informed of the importance of consenting to health interventions and the sharing of their health information. This will enable them to have their physical and emotional health
needs identified and met, and to improve their resilience to be able to raise and meet their aspirations.

- We will ensure that Personal Advisors work with the Health Team in seeking advice to creatively engage Care Leavers in ensuring their health needs are identified to raise awareness of their vulnerability to potential exploitation.
- We will enable Care Leavers to access health services wherever they live, particularly during the transition period and between the ages of 18 and 25 for young people who have Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities (SEND).
- We will ensure that all Care Leavers have received, where accepted, a Health Passport containing their health chronology and immunisation. And in consultation with young people take forward the option for the Health passport to form part of their electronic Care Leavers passport.
- We will ensure that Care Leavers are aware of the financial assistance available to maintain their health e.g. medical treatment, dental, vision screening, prescriptions.
- We will ensure that Care Leavers get their emotional and mental health needs met by the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services Specialist Looked After Children and Care Leavers Team in conjunction with Clinical Psychologists.
- We will support the health team to offer support to foster carers, residential settings and professionals through direct work and or training to ensure the complexity of emotional and mental health needs are understood.
Tackling Inequalities

- Looked After Children and Care Leavers receive high quality support to enable them to achieve better outcomes.

What do we know?

We know that Looked After Children and Care Leavers will have faced many challenges in their lives and are likely to need much more support than other young people as they make their transition to adulthood, and are making that transition at a much younger age than their peers.

To address this more targeted interventions need to be in place to enable Looked After Children to lead fulfilling lives after leaving care.

Nationally both children in care and Care Leavers are over-represented in the criminal justice system. The Prison Reform Trust Inquiry, led by Lord Laming, has examined why that is the case, including whether they are more likely to be criminalised for relatively minor incidents of criminal damage or aggressive behaviour that would not normally result in police involvement if they occurred in a family home.

The crisis in Syria and events in the Middle East have results in an increase in the number of unaccompanied children arriving in the UK and being transferred into the care of local authorities.

What are we going to do about it?

Outcome - Children who have been in care go on to have fulfilling lives where they achieve their potential

For Bournemouth Care Leavers we give children the stability and permanence they need as quickly as possible, and develop better support for Care Leavers by:

- Implementing our Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategies which incorporate the priorities of the Corporate Parenting Panel, improving education, training and placement outcomes both in and out of borough.
- Ensuring that services which are commissioned for Looked After Children and Care Leavers are of high quality and good value and are sufficient for needs.
- Acting upon the relevant strategic intentions of the Commissioning and Sufficiency Plan for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, specifically around the provision of accommodation closer to home and good care planning.
- Implementing the Virtual School Improvement Plan and post-16 Looked After Children and Care Leaver’s Action Plan
- Continuing to ensure that Care Leavers are not over represented within the Criminal Justice System, and have a good record in delivering this ambition through:
  - Working with partner agencies to ensure that Looked After Children are diverted from the justice system in appropriate cases.

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o Supporting Care Leavers to make the right choices and to reduce rates of offending and reoffending.
o Continuing to develop working relationships between local authorities, prisons and probation services.
o Providing a Personal Adviser to any Care Leaver in custody who is pursuing a course of education up to the age of 25.
o Continuing to support any Care Leavers in Youth Offending Institutions and visit them - to see how they are getting on and to update their pathway plan.
o Putting packages of support in place for any Care Leaver released from Young Offenders institutions, including help with a place to live.
o Providing a duty service for both professionals and Care Leavers where advice can be sought regarding any criminal justice matters
o Providing individual case managers to support Care Leavers who are subject to either Court Orders or Out of Court Disposals and ensure that they work closely with Leaving Care workers
o Ensuring that any intervention plans drawn up by the Youth Offending Service are informed by the Pathway Plan
o Providing regular ‘Introduction to the YOS’ workshops for professionals giving an overview of the Youth Justice system and the role of the Youth Offending Service

✓ Ensure that for Care Leavers who are either remanded to, or sentenced to custody there is co-ordination of planning meetings between the Youth Offending Service and the Leaving Care Service
As we develop services for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who are taken into care, we will also be developing services for those then leaving care.

Children and young people enjoy living arrangements that are stable and permanent

What do we know?

National and local feedback from Care Leavers has been that they do not always feel safe in their accommodation.

Local authority Children’s Services are responsible for accommodating 16 and 17-year-old Care Leavers. Statutory guidance states that this accommodation must be safe, secure and affordable. The guidance was updated in 2015 to make it clear that Bed and Breakfast accommodation should only be used in exceptional circumstances and for no more than 2 working days.

Where Care Leavers over 18 are homeless, in recognition of their vulnerability they are given automatic priority need within the homelessness legislation until age 22. Care Leavers above the age of 21 who are vulnerable as a result of having been looked after also have a priority need. Care Leavers are also a priority group within statutory guidance on the allocation of ‘social housing’.

What are we going to do about it?
Outcome - Children and young people live in homes or suitable accommodation with people who care about them.

In Bournemouth we will:

- Work with partner agencies to align commissioning arrangements and processes to have sufficient and appropriate arrangements to meet the accommodation needs of our Care Leavers. Ensuing accommodation is of good quality and provides the sort of stepping stone provision, with support, that Care Leavers need to transition successfully to independent living.
- Make the route into housing for Care Leavers clear and detailed in the Care Leaver Pathway Plans, for those who are in in borough and equally for those in out of borough placements.
- Offer a range of accommodation options to Care Leavers, along the continuum of readiness for independence, including housing with support.
- Give Care Leavers a taste of independence through accessing ‘the training flat’, Milton Flats, and semi-independent flats.
- Ensure that the local Housing Authority’s strategy to prevent and tackle homelessness in Bournemouth considers the needs of Care Leavers who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness. Not placing 16-17 year olds in bed and breakfast accommodation unless in the event of an emergency, where properly risk assessed, and for no more than it has been assessed as necessary.
Care Leavers who do not return home to their family are normally housed in a range of different types of accommodation settings - supported lodgings, semi-independent accommodation, foyers, supported housing and hostels.

Care Leavers leaving care at age 18 from foster care can move into a ‘staying put’ arrangement where both they and their carer want to continue living together. This provides the gradual transition to adulthood that is enjoyed by the majority of young people in the general population.

Young people leaving children’s homes require as much support, if not more, than their counterparts who have been looked after in foster care. ‘Staying close’ arrangements are the next potential initiative for young people to live independently in a location close to their children’s home with ongoing support from that home.

- Commission accommodation services in ways that ensure that providers are equipped to respond to young peoples’ complex needs and operate in accordance with our local safeguarding arrangements.
- Continue to work with housing colleagues to ensure that 16 and 17 year old Care Leavers remain in suitable accommodation when they turn 18, using a range of options with support, or if they are ready, to help them secure and maintain an independent tenancy.
- Help Care Leavers to understand the options available in the local housing market and to prepare for the challenges of maintaining their own home are a key part of the pathway planning process.
- Support Care Leavers to source suitable accommodation through the Housing Options Team which will include a financial and budgeting support, ensuring Care Leavers secure affordable accommodation in order to support them to sustain their tenancy.
- There is an annual quota of 15 Gold Band housing status for carer leavers which allows them to secure a property of their choice from the council’s housing register.
- Ensure that Care Leavers can access advice, support and guidance to sustain their tenancy through the Housing Floating Support services in addition to their Personal Advisor.
- Encourage the take up of ‘staying put’ arrangements to ensure that Care Leavers can continue to live with and get support from their former foster carers.
  - Where ‘staying put’ isn’t the right answer encourage foster carers to provide ongoing emotional and practical support even when the young person does not still live with them - in the same way that parents do when their children leave home.
- Encourage relationships to continue between Care Leavers and other professionals they know and trust - on an informal basis.
All children feel they are cared for and that they are safe and secure

What do we know?
The number of recorded child sexual abuse offences has increased rapidly in this country over the last 2 years. Research regularly finds that children in care and Care Leavers are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse / exploitation.

What are we going to do about it?
Outcome - children are safe from neglect and abuse

In Bournemouth we will:

Work closely across the partnership to ensure robust measures are in place to tackle child sexual exploitation including victimisation of children leaving care.

- Implement the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategies.
- Act upon the strategic intentions of the Commissioning and Sufficiency Plan for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
Ensuring delivery of our plan

Governance

Bournemouth’s Children’s Trust consists of two parts:

- The Children’s Trust Board - the key strategic group, with responsibility for developing the vision and direction for the Trust, including the plan for Children, Young People and their families.

- The Programme Group - who have responsibility for managing the day to day functions of the Children’s Trust and are the ‘delivery arm’ of the Children’s Trust at a local level.

The Children’s Trust in Bournemouth represents a wide range of partner agencies who work with children, young people and their families.

This strategy will be monitored by the Board and the Programme Group.

The delivery of the Care Leavers Strategy will be subject to the Scrutiny of Bournemouth’s Children’s Overview and Scrutiny Panel. This strategy will be implemented and further monitored through Bournemouth’s Corporate Parenting Panel, Legal Panel and Best Care Panel.

The Care Leaver Strategy aligns with the plans and work programmes of the Children’s Trust Board, the Local Safeguarding Children Board, and the Bournemouth and Poole Health and Wellbeing Board.

This strategy seeks to complement, not replicate, the activity undertaken by others to improve outcomes for Care Leavers.
Measuring our success

How we will know our strategy is helping Care Leavers.

In order to find out how well our strategy is working we will do the following:

- We will seek the views of Care Leavers
- We will seek the views of the parents and carers of Care Leavers
- We will monitor and challenge our own progress
- We will monitor the trends in our Care Leaver population
- We will monitor the outcomes of our Care Leavers to the age of 25
- We will work with outside bodies and review our services

Success will directly be measured against the following outcomes

- Young people make successful transitions to adult life and achieve their aspirations through having the care, support and help they need from Bournemouth Borough Council acting as corporate parents
- Care Leavers receive the help they need through having well developed Pathway Plans in place

We believe that if we get this right we will have achieved success and this is how it will look:

- Care Leavers needs are championed across Bournemouth
- Working with our Care Leavers effectively
- Having a robust offer in place that is understood by all and interpreted in the same way
- Having fabulous services available
- Successfully helping our Care Leaver population to achieve good outcomes that exceed the national average
- Effectively delivering our statutory duties
- Care Leavers having higher aspirations and are on their way to achieving their aspirations
- Care Leavers telling us that they have been supported to reach their aspirations whether this is in education, employment or training
- Numbers of Care Leavers in Education, Employment and Training are above the national average and rising
- Young people are telling us that they are recognising their suggestions translating into service development and are happy with what they see
- Increased Education Training and Employment opportunities across Bournemouth for Care Leavers
Our local key performance indicators will be measured through data:

- All Care Leavers remaining engaged in education, taking up training opportunities and undertaking activities aimed at improving employability
- Improved access to, and increased attendance at, further and higher education
- Improved support for Care Leavers while they are at a further education college or university
- An ongoing reduction in the number of Care Leavers who are NEET, through improved support by mainstream and specialist services
- More timely access to mainstream and specialist health services, which meet their physical, mental and sexual health needs
- Programmes in place that reduce homelessness and address the specific needs of Care Leavers
- Programmes in place that reduce crime and the risk of young people being exploited specifically addressing the needs of Care Leavers
- Maintain an appropriate caseload for Personal Advisors

And through surveys of Care Leavers through our Children in Care Council and CLICK

- Improved support for Care Leavers while they are at a further education college or university
- Improved financial support and guidance on offer so that Care Leavers are able to manage their income and reduce the risks of falling into debt
- Care Leavers reporting that they feel safe and that they live in suitable accommodation that meets their individual needs
- Care Leavers receiving high quality ongoing support from their local authorities so that they do not feel lonely and isolated
- Care Leavers leaving care at a time when they are ready
- Care Leavers are knowledgeable about their entitlements through our website, Care Leavers Charter and our comprehensive guides to leaving care
- Improvements in the quality of assessments, plans and reviews
Key achievements from 2015/16

1. As a result of work undertaken on the Ofsted Action Plan and the work following the recent Peer Review of the Children’s Social Care Service, we have been able to move forward with a more focused service Ambitions Plan. The external PEER review highlighted strengths within the service including aspirations of Care Leavers being met, children in care services are good, quality and consistency of supervision and management oversight is good, workforce stability improving and elected members are knowledgeable and engaged. The Service has also achieved a refurbishment and occupation of the second floor of Milton House, creating 2 new training flats for looked after young people, and semi independence flats from Bournemouth Churches Housing Association to extend the number of young people able to have their first experience of independent living.

2. An improved offer to Care Leavers from Health, Education and Children’s Social Care
3. Local business offer - employment and support e.g. Urban Reef providing a bi monthly breakfast for Care Leavers
4. Implementation of the Best Care Strategy, which has improved care planning for both Looked After Children and Care Leavers
5. An increase in the staying put arrangements
6. Growing number of Pathway Carers
7. Apprentice in place working with our Care Leavers Participation Worker
8. Achieving success event for Care Leavers
10. A more fluid movement of Young People from care to semi independence.
11. All Pathway Plans are focused on the needs of the young person.
12. A range of services and options are now in place to ensure young people will receive a good support package in their journey to independence.
Alternative formats can be provided. For language translations or large print, please contact:

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