

Flintshire County Council

**Corporate
Parenting Strategy**

2018-2023

Why have a Corporate Parenting Strategy?

'Corporate Parenting' is a phrase used to describe Flintshire's responsibility for children who become looked after. This responsibility doesn't just sit with Social Services though, it's shared between all council staff, local councillors as well as the other people in a child's life who support them. When a child comes into care, even though they may live with foster carers, Flintshire County Council is ultimately responsible for them. It is our responsibility to make sure that children who are looked after are kept safe and get the support they need.

Corporate parenting is based on the idea that Flintshire County Council officers and its Members have the same hopes and goals, and want to provide the same kind of care, that any good parent would provide for their own children.

Looked after children have lots of skills and talents that can benefit society. Sometimes the circumstances that lead to a child coming into care can mean that they need some extra support to maintain their development in order to reach their potential.

This strategy shows what steps Flintshire County Council will take to ensure that the needs of looked after children who are under our care get the support that they need and deserve.

I am a looked after child, what can I do with this strategy?

This strategy is Flintshire's commitment to all looked after children, showing how they will be supported. If you feel that you are not being properly supported to meet your potential, you can use this document to show the professionals who you work with, that Flintshire wants all of its looked after children to feel safe and to be supported.

The support and pledges in this strategy are to support looked after children of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

Our Pledge

Flintshire County Council is dedicated to providing excellent care for children who become looked after.

Our pledge to children who come under our care is that we will work closely with our own staff and other services to keep our children safe and support looked after children in our area. This applies whether they live in or outside of the council border.

Every good parent wants the best for their child, to see their child be healthy, to be safe and happy, to do well at school, and to have good relationships with their friends. We want our looked after children to be able to get involved in their own hobbies and interests, be supported to engage in sport and exercise, and to grow towards being an adult who is ready to be independent and have a successful life. We want our children to feel ready to have further training, support them through apprenticeships or access higher education, get good careers and jobs, and be financially secure.

Flintshire County Council has the same goals for the children it looks after as those of every good parent, and we take seriously the moral and legal responsibility that we have to make sure children in our care experience happy, safe and fulfilling lives.

Quote from Neil Ayling

Quote from Cllr. Christine Jones

Quote From Craig Macleod

Group photograph of members in order to give 'faces to names' of the members responsible as corporate parents and give a personal feel to the strategy.

Alternatively, a photograph of Cllr Christine Jones, Neil Ayling and Craig Macleod with Job Titles to go alongside the quotes.

Home.

Flintshire is committed to providing looked after children with loving, supportive and stable homes to live in where they will feel safe, valued and cared for by loving and able carers. These are known as 'placements'.

We will:

- Consider where a child would like to live and with whom, and take this into account when looking for a new home.
- Employ and support good Foster Carers and give them training to help them be prepared to manage challenging and unique situations.
- Regularly visit children who are in residential placements to make sure that they are safe and their placement is able to meet their needs.
- Give children the chance to be a part of the community where they live and feel accepted by local people around them.
- Work to make sure that looked after children are able to keep in touch with family, friends and any other important people in their lives in a safe and appropriate way.



Education and learning.

We will be working hard to ensure that looked after children will have the best possible education, attend a school that they like, and go on to have exciting opportunities to fulfil their potential.

- Keeping school a stable point in their lives is essential for looked after children, and we know that moving to a new school or college environment can be intimidating. Flintshire will work to strengthen the understanding between social services staff and schools/ colleges so that they can best support looked after children to achieve their educational goals.
- Every school will have a member of staff dedicated to supporting any looked after children in their school or college.
- Looked after children have the right to want to receive further education and training just as any other child. Financial support and information will be available to support children to achieve these goals.
- We want to ensure that 100% attendance in education is encouraged and supported at all times, by both staff and carers.
- Ensuring that young people have the skills needed for independent living as they move to adulthood.



Health and well-being.

A person's well-being is how happy, comfortable and healthy they are. We want to improve the health of looked after children in Flintshire and to provide them with the best health care and advice.

This includes:

- Making sure looked after children's physical, mental health and emotional well-being are being met through regular Looked after children reviews.
- Ensuring all looked after children have a clear and central voice in how their health needs are met. All children have an appointment with the Looked after children's nurse within the first 14 days of being looked after.
- Having regular dental check-ups.
- Supporting foster carers to better understand the physical and emotional health needs of their foster children.

We know that looked after children share many of the same health risks and problems as any other child in Flintshire, but they frequently enter care with poorer health due to the impact of their circumstances. We will



also be working with the local CAMHS team to set out their plans to support looked after children and care leavers with any mental health needs they might have.

Leisure.

Flintshire will be supporting and encouraging looked after children to enjoy a wide experience of leisure, social, sport and cultural activity to help them to have fun and enjoy their time as a looked after child.

We will:

- Give looked after children information on ways to get involved in the local community.
- Make sure that there are lots of play areas and fun places for children to play in Flintshire.
- Work with looked after children to give them positive experiences giving them a chance to spend time with their family, friends, foster family and residential staff.
- Enable and support looked after children to become involved in local sports and clubs.



Employment Opportunities.

We will provide opportunities to help looked after children and care leavers develop the skills and experience to pursue employment. This will include:

- Offering more apprenticeships in the Council as well as the other businesses that we work closely with.
- Offering work experience and 'taster' sessions for young people to give them an idea of what to expect when going into the world of work.
- Give support to our children that will build their confidence and help raise their self-esteem so that they are 'work-ready' and able to enjoy working.
- Use our networks to engage with other employers to give looked after children a wide range of employment opportunities



Leaving Care.

Upon reaching the age of 18, children legally become adults. This does not mean that they no longer require support to establish their independence and create foundations upon which they can establish the rest of their lives.

As would be expected from any good parent, Flintshire will support looked after children and care leavers to prepare for the future and make positive choices for independent living, in order to become successful and productive members of society.

Flintshire have already made the following pledges to any child or adult leaving care.

We want all care leavers to have:

- Practical and emotional support from a Personal Advisor (PA), available until they reach 25.
- Support to find secure and stable housing. This includes putting care leavers in 'band 1' the highest band for housing.
- Access to advice and support about money - Letting them know what grants they can access and support managing their finances.
- Support to access employment, education and training, including financial support for Higher Education and working with a PA to find employment or training that suits care leavers.
- Support to make sure that care leavers do not go on to live in poverty as they become more independent.



The Voice of Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Flintshire

The voice of looked after children is really important to how we can improve what we do. It's very important that we listen to our children to understand what's matters to them personally and what they want to achieve.

Participation Officer

A participation officer is someone who will listen to looked after children's views and get them involved in the behind the scenes work of Social Services. This officer is a bridge between you and the professionals and councillors whose job it is to make sure that looked after children have a voice in everything the council does. They will also run the participation group.

Participation Group

Flintshire's participation group is an important and fun way that looked after children can get to know about changes to social services, understand their rights and be able to share their experiences with council staff. The group also prepares for the Children's Services Forum which brings councillors, staff and children together to discuss current issues.

Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officer

Looked after children should always be supported to share their views and thoughts with their social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers to ensure that Flintshire can provide the support that they need.

Pride of Flintshire.

Flintshire celebrates and recognises the achievements of looked after children in Flintshire and their carers with exciting events to which every looked after child is invited. We offer opportunities to all looked after children to be involved in the events and to help shape how we recognise our children.



Delivering on our pledge.

In order to ensure that our pledge is fulfilled, Flintshire will create an action plan to deliver on the statements made in this Strategy. This Action Plan will be regularly reviewed to make sure that we are continuing to support looked after children in the right way and respond to any needs that may come up with the children that we look after.

Flintshire are committed to creating 'looked after' friendly local offices that children and young people feel are there to support them and create a comfortable environment for meetings and reviews to take place.

Corporate Parenting is the responsibility of all council staff, and we want to make sure that staff are trained to be aware of and be sensitive to the needs of looked after children so that any interaction with council staff or council members is positive.

Further Information

If you have any questions in regards to Corporate Parenting, please contact Flintshire's Participation Officer Laura Wright on 01352 704145 or Laura.Wright@flintshire.gov.uk

Interested in becoming a foster carer?

Go to www.flintshirefostering.org.uk for further information and to start your journey to changing a child's life.

Alternatively, for more details;

E-mail: fostering@flintshire.gov.uk

Phone: 01352 702190

IF YOU WOULD LIKE THIS DOCUMENT IN ANOTHER FORM (AUDIO, BRAILLE ETC) PLEASE CONTACT {INFORMATION OFFICER} ON {INFORMATION OFFICER EMAIL/ NUMBER}



Glossary

Foster Care

Foster Care is where you live in a carer's home. This can be short term, while staff make a decision about where you are to live in the future, or long term, in which you stay in the carer's home until you leave care

Kinship Care

Kinship care refers to the care of children by relatives, such as grandparents or aunts and uncles.

Residential Home

This is also known as a Children's Home. You live here with other children and staff at the home care for you.

Out of County Placement

This is a foster home or a children's residential home that is not in Flintshire.

Respite Care

This is a stay in a foster home or a children's residential home for a planned amount of time only, and is to give your parents or carer support and a break if they need it.

Residential School

This is a boarding school. You live at the school and go home or to a placement at weekends or during holidays.