



Education, Employment and Training Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2017-2020

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Statement from Slough Borough Council and Slough Children's Services Trust

On behalf of Slough's Joint Parenting Panel and the young people who have contributed their thoughts and experiences during the development of this strategy, we are pleased to introduce our first education, employment and training strategy for Slough's children looked after and care leavers.

In our joint role as 'corporate parents' we want all of our children looked after and care leavers to have the best start in life. We also want them to go on and achieve the best educational, training and economic outcomes they can, just like any other parent would wish for their children. And, like any good parent, we want our young people to go on to higher education or into employment or training, if that is what they want to do.

We know that in the past our children looked after and care leavers didn't always get the right support or help they needed to move out of care and into full time education or work, or to have the same opportunities as others. We are now doing all that we can to put that right and this strategy sets out how we will improve our education, employment and training offer to all our children looked after and care leavers between now and 2020.

We began developing this strategy after inviting a group of children looked after and care leavers to tell us about their education and employment stories and experiences. We then asked members of our Reach Out! groups, carers, staff, practitioners and partners for their views and compared how our education, employment and training services fared against other local authorities. Together with our young people's stories and experiences this told us what was working well and what needed to change.

This strategy focuses on those priority areas that you told us most need to change and sets out how we will work together and with others to transform those areas that we now know need to improve.

It highlights four priority areas where we believe, based on the feedback that you provided, we can channel our energy and begin to make a real difference now and in the future. These priority areas are ambitious - whilst realistic.

We are proud of how your voice and experiences have helped shape the priorities in strategy and we are committed to driving through these changes on your behalf.

To maximise the impact of this strategy we will keep it under continuous review and add to it each year, in collaboration with our children looked after and care leavers, to ensure that it remains up to date and relevant and focused on achieving the right outcomes for all our children looked after and care leavers.

This strategy is for you.

Councillor Shabnum Sadiq
Cabinet Member for Children,
Education and Families,
Slough Borough Council

Cate Duffy
Director of Children's
Services and Skills,
Slough Borough Council

Nicola Clemo
Chief Executive
Slough Children's
Services Trust

Vision

We are committed to ensuring that all of our children looked after and care leavers (wherever they are placed), are engaged in education, employment or training commensurate with their ability and aspirations and are helped to make significant progress towards achieving their recognised career ambitions, so they grow up prepared for the future.

Introduction

Children looked after and care leavers are especially deserving of our help precisely because they are in care. This strategy is not a standalone document and needs to be seen in the context of a holistic approach which recognises the importance of:

- Effective support for those on the 'edge of care' - it is important to recognise that many children come in and out of care in a short space of time, and several spend more than one period in care
- The timeliness of care proceedings - so that children's needs are assessed and that an effective plan to meet these needs is put in place in a timely way
- Better placements (choice, stability, permanency) - to minimise avoidable disruptions to children's lives
- Support outside of schools - for example access to leisure facilities, opportunities to volunteer, support to access to health facilities and to housing
- Support in transition into adult life - so that young people move on in a gradual, phased and prepared way to lead independent, fulfilling lives
- Ensuring the voice of the child is at the heart of what we do.

Priority outcomes

Our overarching aim as joint corporate parents in this strategy is to narrow and close the gap in outcomes between our children looked after and care leavers and their peers in Slough with the following focus:

- **(Priority outcome 1)** - Ensure you have access to the best possible education, training and job opportunities that meet your needs
- **(Priority outcome 2)** - Support you to attend and achieve your potential whether at school/college, university, in training or work
- **(Priority outcome 3)** - Support you to make a successful transition into adult life
- **(Priority outcome 4)** - Place your voice at the centre of what we do.

We also know that our children looked after and care leavers often face additional barriers throughout their lives and we are developing additional ambitions to support our aspirations:

- That as many of our children looked after live in Slough or as close by (i.e. within 20 miles) as is practicable and appropriate
- That all children and young people who are placed out of borough (OOB) have the same opportunities as their peers and contemporaries.

The next section sets out what we have already done to deliver our priority outcomes, what we plan to do next (in 2018) and in the years ahead (2019-2020) and how we plan to keep track of and monitor our performance.

The detail of delivery (including all of the individual actions and success measures that we will use to keep track of our performance) is set out in the action plan that accompanies this strategy.

We will work across our organisations and in collaboration with partner agencies to align our commitments and ensure our priorities underpin action and that those actions meet your needs and have the biggest impact. And while we and our partner agencies cannot control the national economy or market forces, we will use our combined powers, influence and leverage to create the right conditions to help you enjoy life and learning, feel confident about your futures and aspire to achieve your full potential while we are your corporate parents.

(Priority outcome 1): Ensure you have access to the best possible education, training and job opportunities that meet your needs

Many of our children looked after and care leavers have suffered disrupted learning and may have missed extended periods of school and these gaps in their learning are likely to be a significant barrier to their progress.

Valuing and supporting the education of children looked after is one of the most important contributions a corporate parent can make to the lives of children looked after and care leavers, because it is about investing in and caring about their future and recognising that education is their passport to better life chances.

'I like to go to school and have teachers who I trust'

'I am in year 13 and have received good quality careers advice in my school'

'The visit to Oxford was really interesting and it has made me want to go to university.'

Our joint pledge says that ...

'We will help you get the best educational outcomes and have a computer to help support you with your education.'

What we have done so far?

- The Trust has established a recognised and respected Virtual School, offering the same service, or equivalent, to all our out of borough (OOB) students
 - Care leavers attended optional maths and English training to improve their qualifications in both GCSEs and functional skills. Evaluations from young people are very positive. (Exam results in August 2017)
 - An Employment Plan has been developed, outlining the Virtual School offer to all age groups from 5 years up
 - Children missing education and learning dropped from 26 in June 2016 to 11 in May 2017 (of which 5 were over 18 years old)
 - Significantly improved retention rates at college and those that have left have been re-integrated by end of year
 - Career planning is now incorporated within all Pathway Plans for post 16 students
 - The Virtual School's Action Plan for 2017-18 had developing employability as a theme
- Pupil Voice heard and acted on:
 - Personal Education Plans (PEPs) all have a pupil voice section, where opinions about school and career aspiration are completed by the children looked after
 - Coram Bright Spots survey in March 2017 to measure the quality of their care experience and their sense of wellbeing
- By working together the council and the Trust have been able to deliver quality service

- Working with children looked after and leaving care hubs (in the Trust) has contributed to a number of the significant improvements being noted by Ofsted during monitoring visits
- Support from Slough's Educational Psychology Service is now provided to students placed out of borough (OOB)
- The council's Young People's Service now provides three career aspiration visits to all Year 11s wherever they live
- From no meaningful data available to Ofsted in December 2015, a meaningful database on each child looked after by Slough was created and is used daily
 - Attainment and progress, attendance, number and quality of Personal Education Plans and Ofsted rating of school tracked
- Improved aspiration for education, employment and training for children looked after whatever their abilities (academic and otherwise):
 - Gifted and talented register established
 - Increasing numbers aware of and taking up apprenticeships
 - Wider range and depth of courses and career options
 - Three University taster days (including Oxford)
 - Increase in numbers attending Slough grammar schools.

What are we going to do next?

- 1) Ensure the voice of the child is heard and acted on
- 2) Develop employment readiness through a school year group by school year group offer to all children looked after
- 3) Hold the Virtual School to account. Develop the expertise and awareness of foster carers in education and employment

- 4) Develop the education, training and employment offer available, ensuring it reaches out to the most vulnerable and challenging children and young people
- 5) Ensure Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) spending is bespoke and appropriate
- 6) Develop the emotional health and well being offer in the Virtual School
- 7) Increase the quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs)
- 8) Develop the education offer for Years 11-13
- 9) Continue to develop our data set
- 10) Work with young offender institutes to ensure the needs of young people who have offended are met, especially in respect of Education Care and Health Plans (ECHP).

(Priority outcome 2): Support you to attend and achieve your potential whether at school/college, university, in training or work

This priority is about enabling our children and young people in care and care leavers to overcome barriers to employment, obtain the right skills and the ability to access quality, sufficiently paid work so that they improve their lives and so fulfil their potential in work.

'My key worker has really helped me to try and get into college. They have also helped me to find some part time work. I am really interested in horticulture and would like to work in a garden centre'

'My foster carer was very interested and supportive in helping me with choosing university'

'I am currently studying a catering course as I've always had a passion for cooking.'

Our pledge says that ...

'We will ensure you receive the best advice and support about applying for college and university, applying for a job and for your future career.'

What we have done so far?

- Established a multi-agency Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) Action Group to improve the outcomes of those young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. This group also uses detailed RONI¹ data to provide individual, targeted 1:1 careers information, advice and support to young people
- Improved service providers and partners' awareness and understanding of the needs of our children looked after and care leavers, and the barriers that prevent them from securing meaningful employment
- Broadened the range of opportunities for care leavers to access apprenticeship programmes, from business administration to youth work and customer services, and together, through working with partners (such as AVARTO) increased the number of children looked after and care leavers taking up apprenticeships
- Provided specialist careers information and advice for all young people in care in Slough who were NEET or at risk of becoming NEET
- Increased the numbers of young people entering further and higher education by providing:
 - A two day residential course for all Year 8 children to raise their aspirations
 - Provided careers advice and support to all Year 8 children, prior to them making their course selections in Year 9
 - Provided three career development visits for all Year 11 children with destination plans to support their aspirations
 - Undertaken visits to Oxford, Brunel and Reading universities to raise aspiration

¹ RONI means Risk of NEET Indicator. It identifies children and young people who are at risk of being NEET at school)

- o Provided support to young people to help them prepare applications for college and university; and
- o Run additional maths and English skills classes for all our care leavers to help them improve their chances of gaining employment or continuing in education.

What are we going to do next?

- 1) Extend the provision of specialist careers information advice and guidance for all young people placed out of the borough who have been identified NEET or who are at risk of becoming NEET
- 2) Identify and secure a minimum of five employers who will commit to delivering an employability passport scheme (guaranteed interview scheme)
- 3) Train all of our Personal Advisors (PAs) to raise awareness of the range of employment opportunities available for young people so they can effectively signpost individuals on
- 4) Work with Heathrow Ltd to widen the choice of training and work opportunities that are available for young people and support our young people to access those opportunities
- 5) Secure funding to create a dedicated post to work with those 21 to 25 year olds and over who are NEET
- 6) Continue to develop the number (and quality) of apprenticeship opportunities available at the Council, within the Trust and with other local employers (incl. Slough Urban Renewal, Osbourne and AVARTO).

(Priority outcome 3): Support you to make a successful transition into adult life

Our young people say it is important to receive appropriate support and advice in preparing for independence, particularly around developing the right budgeting skills.

They are also concerned about not getting the financial support they need to help sustain them at college or university.

'I live in semi-supported accommodation and my key worker has really helped me try to get back into college and help me to find some part time work.'

Our joint Pledge says that...

'We will support you to learn about budgeting, how to cook, clean and other independent living skills.'

What we have done so far?

- Developed the 'Are you mindful - Care Leavers Strategy 2017'. This document sets out our joint priorities for providing care leavers with the best possible care and support services as they plan to leave our care
- Developed a life skills programme to support young people as they work towards independence, which includes guidance in respect of budgeting and living independently
- Developed a financial policy and entitlement guide clarifying the support that is available to help sustain you in your choice of accommodation, at college or university and while you are training or in work
- Ensured our new Housing Strategy 2017 prioritises delivering an adequate supply of housing for care leavers and vulnerable young people in partnership with Slough Children's Services Trust and other relevant agencies.

What will we do next?

- 1) Deliver the life skills programme (to all children looked after prior to their leaving care and to others who may have already left care), to prepare and support independence and prepare for adult life
- 2) Work with relevant services and partners to provide our care leavers with affordable local housing so they can stay in Slough if they want to
- 3) Complete and agree the Slough multi agency protocol for transition from childhood to adulthood.

(Priority outcome 4): Place your voice at the centre of what we do

We recognise it is important to ensure the views, wishes and feelings of our children and young people and care leavers are listened too and they are treated with respect.

Children and young people should be involved in, and understand the decisions made about their lives. They should be supported to understand how to get information, advice and support they need and how to complain.

'I have represented the Reach Out! Group at the Joint Parenting Panel (JPP). It was a good experience. It gave me a chance to raise my concerns or things I wasn't sure about. It's so important for young people to be part of the JCPB.'

Our joint Pledge says...

'We will listen if you have a complaint or would like to praise someone.'

'We will make sure you can speak to someone you trust about anything you are worried about, even at evenings and weekends.'

What have we done so far?

- Increased the opportunities for young people to feedback on their experiences and influence future service delivery within the Council and the Trust. As a result, our care leavers now report they have a 'strong voice' and are 'consistently' listened to. Care leavers also report they now feel more engaged and involved in their assessments and plans
- Listened too and responded to care leavers concerns about their accommodation and housing needs.

What will we do next?

- 1) Continue to provide a range of opportunities and mechanism to feedback and comment on the quality of services received
- 2) Use feedback to monitor current service delivery and design and develop new services to met any unmet need
- 3) Provide advice, guidance and kinship for those care leavers who choose to keep in touch with us
- 4) Provide support to care leavers on issues that concern them.

Performance scorecard

It is important we are able to provide evidence of progress towards achieving better outcomes to improve our children looked after and care leavers' lives.

The table below sets out a scorecard of performance measures which we will use to hold services and partners agencies to account in progressing the actions against this strategy's shared priorities each year.

It is intended that over the lifetime of this strategy, we use these measures to demonstrate our performance whether it is good or bad - so we can assess the impact of our actions on outcomes, spot trends and tackle issues to help us get back on track where needed.

| Priority outcome | Performance measure | Target |
|---|---|--|
| 1 Ensure you have access to the best possible education, training and job opportunities that meet your needs | Reduce the number of Children Missing Education (CME - under 16s) and Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETS - over 16s) | No more than 8% as the combined figure for CME and NEETs |
| | Employment matches the young person's interests and abilities. It is bespoke and aspirational | By May each year, every young person in Year 11 and Year 13 has a quality and aspirational guaranteed education, employment and training offer, commensurate with their ability |
| | Improved resilience to get to a desired ultimate employment goal | Coram Bright Spots and Pupil Voice in PEPs shows 90% + have positive view of their schooling/college experience and aspirational career options |
| | Low drop out rate at transition points post 16 | Fewer than 2% of cohort has dropped out of college/university course/apprenticeship in their first year |
| | Numbers taking late entry functional skills or GCSEs and passing exams at an aspiration level for them increases | 100% of students put in late for functional skills and GCSEs attain or exceed their grades |
| 2 Support you to attend and achieve your potential whether at school/college, university, in training or work | Increase number of PAs trained and confident to signpost CLA/CL on to relevant support services | 100% of Pathway plans to reference skills and training |
| | Improve the quality of pathway plans completed | Employment opportunities match the young person's interests and abilities. It is bespoke and aspirational Wider range of courses and types of career considered by care leavers |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | Reduce levels of those not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETS) | Reduce CLA/LC NEET to 25% or lower 0.5FTE intensive support worker appointed |
| | Establish an employability passport linked to a guaranteed interview programme | 5 employers recruited |
| | Increase number of activities undertaken with Heathrow Ltd | A minimum of two programmes /activities delivered involving CLA/CL |
| 3 Support you to make a successful transition into adult life | Establish twice a year a life skills programme | Minimum of 10 young people to complete the first programme commencing August 2017 |
| | Agreed Transition Protocol | Protocol signed off by Trust and Council by November 2017 |
| 4 Place your voice at the centre of what we do | Increase in the number of young people giving positive feedback about the quality of services provided Feedback from CLA/CL used to adapt practise Service delivery plugs identified gaps Pathway planning reflects contact with all care leavers (who are in contact with the Trust) | All Pathway Plans reflect the voice of the young person Demonstrable analysis, actions or impact as a result of feedback from young people |
| Additional priorities That as many of our children looked after live in Slough or as close by (i.e. within 20 miles) as is practicable and appropriate. That all children and young people who are placed out of borough (OOB) have the same opportunities as their peers and contemporaries | | All CLA/LC NEET have support package to secure EET within 6 weeks of becoming NEET Lead youth worker appointed to support CLA/CL who are NEET and live out of borough |

We will revisit this strategy each year to 2020 to ensure that we continue to identify and work on those areas that most need to change.

As part of this review, we will listen to the views and experiences of our children looked after and care leavers, carers, staff, practitioners and partners.

Appendix 1: Slough as a place

- 1) Slough had a population of 145,734 residents in 2015
- 2) Slough is a young town with 43,878 0-19 year olds living within its boundaries (30% of the population as a whole)
- 3) 20% of households are families with dependent children
- 4) Our under 19 population is expected to rise by 9% in the next ten years
- 5) 18% of children under 16 years of age are living in poverty and there is considerable deprivation in Slough: Britwell and Northborough, Elliman, Chalvey and Colnbrook and Slough are all in the 20% most deprived deciles of deprivation
- 6) 31.6% of children in Slough are under 5 years old (census 2011 'Slough Story')
- 7) The proportion of children entitled to free school meals is 10% in our primary schools (the national level is 15%) and 9% in our secondary Schools (the national level is 13%)
- 8) Slough is a super diverse city: 54% of residents come from a minority ethnic group and about 150 languages are spoken in our schools
- 9) Our children are more diverse still: approx. 66% of all children living in the area come from a minority ethnic group (compared to 22% in the country nationally)
- 10) 63% of our primary and 71% of our secondary school children come from a minority ethnic group
- 11) 60% of our primary aged pupils and 46% of our secondary aged pupils have English as an Additional Language (the national levels are 20 and 16% respectively)
- 12) 9% of children are Children in Need (Significantly higher than the national average). 65% were in need due to abuse, neglect or family dysfunction
- 13) In 2017, 202 children were children looked after (a rate of 45.9 per 1,000 children). This is an increase from 196 (49.2 per 10,000 children) at 31 March 2015
- 14) 186 children in care (in June 2016) had an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and 26 had a Statement of Educational Need (17% of Slough's children in care population). 2 further children had EHCPs pending from needs identified in summer 2016 PEPs
- 15) 54% of our children looked after are white/white British, 12 % are Asian/Asian British, 23% have mixed ethnicity and 8% are black/black British
- 16) 39% of Slough's care leavers were NEET, compared to 15% of their non-care peers (5% were in Year 10 and younger, 13% were in Year 11 and 13.5% were in Year 12 and 13)
- 17) 5% of our children looked after in Year 12 and 13 were young offenders
- 18) There were no permanent children looked after exclusions in 2015/16
- 19) 30% of the children looked after (reception to Year 11) were educated within the borough in 2015, this rose to 40% in 2016
- 20) 56% were educated out of borough (OOB) (67 children/young people). 1.5% was in hospital (2 children/young people) and 2.5% were NEET (3 children and young people). Of those being educated outside the borough², 66% were being schooled within 20 miles of Slough (78 children and young people)

² For some young people placements away from their home community are a key part of the care plan as a result of antisocial behaviour/risk taking behaviours. For some the needs of young people are such that they require specialist placements which are not available in Slough or surrounding boroughs.

- 21) 82 children of statutory age who were in care were in mainstream education. 10 children were in special schools, of which 2 were independent schools, and in all cases the child had either an EHCP or a Statement of Educational Need (SEN).
- For full details of the educational outcomes of our children looked after in 2016/17 please click here [<http://www.scstrust.co.uk/who-we-are/reports-publications/>]
 - This report summarises the impact of our activities and identifies areas of future development to achieve improved outcomes for our children looked after. The data contained in this report is for looked after children who were in the Trust's care for the academic year 2016/17 and includes outcomes for all children and validated data for children who have been in care for a year or more as at 31st March 2016.

Appendix 2: Links to the Corporate Parenting Plan 2016-2018

This strategy sits underneath our Corporate Parenting Plan 2016-2018. The vision of our Corporate Parenting Plan is simple: we would like all of our children and young people to have everything that all good parents want for their children. We want them to work with us, along with their parents and carers in shaping how we manage and organise and deliver the services that support and care for them. We want our children and young people to be happy and healthy, enjoy life and learning, to be safe and protected from harm and exploitation and supported each step of the way to an independent life as adults. We want them to achieve their full potential, especially at school, and to be involved in the decisions that affect their care and their lives.

This strategy sets out how we will deliver on those elements of the Plan that specifically relate to the education, employment and training needs of all our children looked after and care leavers.

Appendix 3: Links to other documents and strategic plans

This strategy is a companion document to, and has been informed by, and helps to contribute to the delivery of the following strategic documents:

Slough Borough Council's Five Year Plan 2017-2021

One of the key ambitions of this plan is for our residents and businesses to have the opportunity to prosper. In order to achieve this aspiration, this plan includes the following outcome in respect of the borough's children and young people - they will have the best start in life and opportunities to give them positive lives. This aspiration includes all our children looked after and care leavers.

Slough's Joint Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2020

This document sets out the Wellbeing Board's key priorities for working with key partners and agencies to target services effectively towards vulnerable people (including children and young people) across the borough.

Our pledge: Our promises to our looked after children in Slough

Our pledge was developed by Reach Out!. Reach Out! is the name given to the Slough Children in Care Council by our children looked after and care leavers. It complements our Corporate Parenting Plan and is a promise given by us and our partner agencies about the quality and nature of care that any child or young person can expect if they become looked after by us.

This strategy explains how we will deliver on those elements of the pledge that specifically relate to our children looked after and care leavers' education, employment and training needs.

Our promises to our children looked after in Slough

- We will make sure that social workers take the time to get to know and understand you
- We will make sure that social workers are friendlier and listen to you more
- We will help you to have the same social worker for a long time
- We will make sure that foster carers treat you the same as their own children, so there is no favouritism and give you the care and love that you need
- We will make sure you have access to and are provided with the right advice and support to ensure you are physically and emotionally healthy
- We will help you have a healthy diet (one of your 5 a day) and make sure you have opportunities to take part in activities that will keep you healthy
- We will help you to stay where you are living if that is what you want
- We will help you to you get the best educational outcomes and have a computer to help support you with your education
- We will make sure you have the opportunity to take part in activities and hobbies
- We will help you to keep in touch with your friends and receive the right information about staying over at your friend's house
- We will help you to be involved in the decisions that are made about you and any decisions and plans that are made about your future
- We will help you to be involved in choosing your placement and to know more about where you are moving to, including being able to visit any new carers before you move
- We will ensure you receive the best advice and support about applying for college and university, applying for a job and for your future career

- We will help and support you to learn about budgeting, how to cook, clean and other independent living skills
- We will support you to find a place to live, that is safe and secure and is suitable for your needs. We will ensure we plan ahead to make sure that, together, we find the right place for you, when you move on from care
- We want to support you to have contact with your family and friends. If this is not possible we will tell you why
- We will offer you the support of an advocate or independent visitor if you feel that you are not being supported. Sometimes you may find it difficult to say what you want and you may want some support to put your views forward
- We will listen if you have a complaint or would like to praise someone
- We will make sure you can speak to someone who you trust about anything you are worried about, even at evenings and weekends
- If we make a promise to you we will keep it.

Appendix 4: The national context for this strategy

- Under the Children Act 1989, a child is legally defined as looked after by a local authority or, in our case, the Trust if he or she is provided with an accommodation for a continuous period for more than 24 hours is subject to care order; or is subject to a placement order
- A looked after child ceases to be looked after when he or she turns 18 years old. On reaching his or her 18th birthday, the status of the child changes from being looked after to being a young adult eligible for help and assistance from their local authority as a care leaver

- At present, all care leavers receive support from a Trust Personal Advisor to the age of 21 or 25 if they have a Statement of Educational Need (SEN). The Personal Advisor helps the care leaver to make the transition to independence, using a 'Pathway Plan' to identify the steps the young person needs to take to achieve their goals; and how the Trust will support them to do so
- If a care leaver remains in or returns to education, support from their Personal Advisor continues up to age 25. Other care leavers, including those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), are not currently entitled to any continuing support
- However, in recognition of the extra vulnerability of those who are NEET and the fact that many young people in the wider population continue to get support from their parents until their mid-twenties, the Government's 'Keep on Caring Strategy, Supporting Young People from Care to Independence' Strategy and the Children's Social Work Act 2017 has extended support for all care leavers to age 25
- Nationally, there has been a steady increase in the number of children and young people becoming looked after. In the year ending 31 March 2015, a total of 69,540 children were looked after by local authorities in England, a rate of 60 per 10,000 children under 18 years. At local authority level the rate varies significantly
- The majority of children looked after are provided with a service due to abuse or neglect
- There were 27,220 care leavers aged 19-21 years of age nationally as of March 2014
- In 2013 the government launched the Care Leaver Strategy setting out a coherent cross departmental approach to the support of care leavers, setting out changes to how local services are provided on the ground, and building on the best local practise. Children and young people achieve their best outcomes when provided with security, stability and love throughout their childhood and beyond
- The underpinning principle of the Children Act 1989 places legal duty on local authorities to support families to stay together when this is a safe and realistic option
- The majority of children looked after return home to their families after a short period of time in the care of a local authority
- Every year almost 10,000 young people leave care; most will have experienced instability and trauma in their childhoods and will go on to face extreme challenges in adulthood. In terms of their educational outcomes, they are:
 - five time less likely to achieve five good GCSEs
 - eight times more likely to have been excluded from school
 - more likely to be Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
 - less likely to be compliant with the Raising Participation Age (RPA) duty to participate in learning up to their 18th birthday; and
 - less likely to go on to access further/higher education or university
- Virtual schools became mandatory in 2014 to support children looked after to achieve at school and college.

Appendix 5: Our corporate parenting responsibilities

Slough's Joint Parenting Panel was established in 2016. We are an advisory body made up of elected members and senior managers and officers from the Council and the Trust, as well as representatives of partners who work for, and with, children looked after and care leavers in the borough.

We advise the council, the Trust, the cabinet, a cabinet member or other committees of the council on matters relating to our children looked after and care leavers.

Our duty is to ensure the council, the Trust and our partner agencies have a joint commitment to³:

- a) Achieving improved outcomes for children looked after
- b) Agreeing and overseeing the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Plan to drive improved outcomes
- c) Narrowing the achievement gap experienced by children looked after
- d) Ensuring that our children looked after are supported in life and services are designed in order to meet their needs.

Our role is also to carry out many of the responsibilities that a loving parent should.

And, while we may not be able to provide everything a parent can, we must provide all of the children and young people in our care with the best possible support and care.

This includes encouraging people and organisations to do as much as they can towards improving the levels of care provided for our children looked after children, so that they feel in control of their lives, and are able to overcome the barriers they face.

At a practical level, this means:

- (a) Acting in the best interests, and promoting the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of our children and young people;
- (b) Encouraging our children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- (c) Taking into account the views, wishes and feelings of our children and young people;
- (d) helping our children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the council, the Trust and our relevant partners;
- (e) Promoting high aspirations, and seeking to secure the best outcomes, for our children and young people;
- (f) Ensuring that our children and young people are safe, and have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
- (g) Preparing our children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

We also have a duty to promote the educational achievement of all our children looked after. In Slough, the Trust's Virtual School Head Teacher champions the education of children in care as if they all attend the same school. This has been shown nationally to have a positive impact on educational progress.

³ Children and Social Work Act 2017

