

Report title: Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers

Wards affected: Citywide

Strategic Director: John Readman

Report Author: Angela Clarke

RECOMMENDATION for the Mayor's approval:

1. To endorse the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers as part of our Children's Services Improvement Plan
2. To approve the publication and launch of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers
3. To require an annual performance report on our progress in improving outcomes for children in care and care leavers

Key background / detail:

a. Purpose of the report:

To introduce the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers and seek approval for their publication

b. Key details:

1. The new Corporate Parenting Strategy has been developed as part of the Children's Services Improvement Plan, which draws together the Council's response to the 2014 Ofsted Inspection of Bristol's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.
2. Bristol City Council currently has a Children in Care and Care Leavers Pledge which was developed in 2010, and publishes a Children in Care annual report each year. There is currently no specific Corporate Parenting Strategy
3. The Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines how we intend to improve support for children in care and care leavers. The aim of the new Strategy is to capture Bristol City Council's corporate aims and ambitions in relation to our corporate parenting responsibilities. This document outlines our vision, aims, and actions, as well as demonstrating how we will improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.
4. Alongside the new Strategy, the Council's Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers has been updated since its' original development in 2010 to include feedback from young people gained through focus groups, a survey of young people in care and care leavers, and in consultation with young people at the Corporate Parenting Panel. The Pledge is a document for children and young people themselves, outlining our commitments to them and the services and support they can expect while they are in care and when they become care leavers.

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL
CABINET
3 November 2015**

REPORT TITLE: Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers

Ward(s) affected by this report: City-wide

Strategic Director: John Readman

Report author: Angela Clarke

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The proposal:

1. Background:

- 1.1. The new Corporate Parenting Strategy has been developed as part of the Children's Services Improvement Plan, which draws together the Council's response to the 2014 Ofsted Inspection of Bristol's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.
- 1.2. Ofsted's 2014 report considered that "The corporate parenting plan does not provide the focus and drive needed to improve services for looked after children and care leavers" and recommended that Bristol City Council "publish and implement an updated corporate parenting plan to drive improvement in the quality and coordination of services to address the current poor outcomes for looked after children and care leavers"

1.3. The Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers is therefore a key part of our Children's Services Improvement Plan. Action 9 of the Children's Service Improvement Plan is to:

1.3.1. *Publish and implement an updated Corporate Parenting Strategy including refreshing the Children in Care and Care Leavers Pledge, that identifies priorities for improvement in the quality and coordination of services.*

1.4. Bristol City Council currently has a Children in Care and Care Leavers Pledge which was developed in 2010, and publishes a Children in Care annual report each year. There is currently no specific Corporate Parenting Strategy, although there are a range of associated documents.

1.5. The Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines how we intend to improve support for children in care and care leavers. The aim of the new Strategy is to capture Bristol City Council's corporate aims and ambitions in relation to our corporate parenting responsibilities. This document outlines our vision, aims, and actions, as well as demonstrating how we will improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

1.6. Alongside the new Strategy, the Council's Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers has been updated since its' original development in 2010 to include feedback from young people gained through focus groups, a survey of young people in care and care leavers, and in consultation with young people at the Corporate Parenting Panel. The Pledge is a document for children and young people themselves, outlining our commitments to them and the services and support they can expect while they are in care and when they become care leavers. Most notably, the pledge now includes a section specifically for Care Leavers, outlining what young people can expect from us when they leave care.

1.7. It is important that the Pledge is accessible to young people and that they are aware of its existence. Further work will be required with foster carers and Independent Reviewing Officers to ensure that children and young people are aware of the pledge.

1.8. While the Corporate Parenting Strategy is a strategic document whose audience is Bristol City Council and our partners, the Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers should be an accessible document for children and young people in care and coming into care. The Strategy and pledge have been included as Appendix A and B.

2. Governance:

2.1. Bristol's Corporate Parenting Panel ensures that the City Council effectively discharges its role as corporate parent of looked after children. The Panel is a group of cross-party elected members, Bristol City Council officers and other partners. The Chair is the Assistant Mayor for People. The group includes representatives of looked after children, their carers, and other stakeholders.

2.2. The Corporate Parenting Panel will continue to act as a hub of engagement, leadership and scrutiny of all work associated with meeting the needs of children in

care and care leavers.

2.3. To strengthen the city leadership of outcomes for children in care and care leavers, the following multi-agency boards will ensure that Corporate Parenting is a priority, and will be responsible for ensuring that the relevant Corporate Parenting Strategy objectives are achieved:

Board	Area of Responsibility	Strategic Objectives
Children and Families Board	Early Help	Objective 1 - Support more children to live safely with their family and reduce the need to be cared for by intervening early
Safeguarding Children Board	Safeguarding	Objective 2 - If children cannot remain in their parents' care, look to their extended family for support first
		Objective 3 – Ensure that children receive the right services and only remain in care for as long as they need to. Make sure that this is informed by an assessment and plan which they and their family understand and which they have been able to contribute to
		Objective 4 - Ensure that being in care is an enriching experience for children and that we equip them for a successful and fulfilling future
		Objective 5 - Ensure enough good quality placements for children by recruiting, retaining and commissioning sufficient foster carers to offer children placement choice, to keep children placed locally and to achieve high levels of placement stability
		Objective 6 - Ensure that all young people are in safe and secure accommodation by offering appropriate accommodation to 16-18 year olds who meet the threshold for care
Learning City Board	Education	Objective 7 - Close the attainment gap for children in care by ensuring that they receive good quality education and that we support them to have high aspirations
		Objective 8 - Improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers, including increasing the percentage of care leavers in education, employment and training
Health and Wellbeing Board	Health	Objective 9 – Improve the health and wellbeing of children in care and care leavers, and provide services of a high standard to support their needs

3. Launch:

3.1. We will officially launch the new Strategy and Pledge at an event on the 24th November. Children in care and care leavers will take a central role in this event, introducing the purpose of the documents and explaining how their involvement has made a difference to their experience in care. This will be an opportunity to raise awareness of our commitments to children in care and care leavers, and officially sign the Pledge.

4. Consultation and scrutiny input:

4.1. The Strategy and Pledge have been developed in consultation with a range of partners and the voices of young people have been central to the development of both documents.

a. Internal consultation:

Consultation has taken place with the different Council directorates, the People Extended Leadership Team, Children’s Management Team, Extended Leadership Team, and the Education Directorate Management Team. A draft Strategy and Pledge were considered by both the People Directorate Leadership Team and the Senior Leadership Team.

b. External consultation:

Messages from children in care were gleaned through a session at Corporate Parenting Panel with young people in care, and a survey of children in care and care leavers. The aim is to respond to their priorities through the strategic actions outlined in the Strategy, and the more tangible commitments outlined in the Pledge. Further consultation will be taking place with the Children in Care Council to review the commitments in the Pledge and ensure that they address their priorities. Consultation also took place with the Children and Families Board and the Children in Care Health Steering Group.

As a result of consultation, the voices of children in young people in care are central to both documents and have influenced the objectives and actions in the Strategy, and the commitments made in the Pledge. Health partners have contributed to the health sections of each document and Care Leavers have been considered in a specific section of the Pledge

6. Other options considered:

As a result of the recommendations made by Ofsted, the Children’s Service Improvement plan included the development of a Corporate Parenting Strategy as a priority, no other options were therefore considered.

Risk management / assessment:

FIGURE 1							
The risks associated with the implementation of the <i>(subject)</i> decision :							
No.	RISK Threat to achievement of the key objectives of the report	INHERENT RISK (Before)		RISK CONTROL MEASURES Mitigation (ie controls) and Evaluation (ie effectiveness of mitigation).	CURRENT RISK (After)		RISK OWNER
		Impact	Probability		Impact	Probability	
1	The Council and partners are unable to deliver the commitments outlined in the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge	High	Med	Commitment has been secured across directorates and from partners to delivering these objectives as a priority	Low	Low	Corporate Parenting Panel

2	The Strategy and Pledge are delayed and not finalised in time for the launch on the 24 th November	High	Low	Timescales have been established to ensure that there is sufficient time between the Cabinet meeting and Launch to allow for any necessary amendments	Low	Low	Angela Clarke
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FIGURE 2

The risks associated with not implementing the (subject) decision:

No.	RISK	INHERENT RISK		RISK CONTROL MEASURES	CURRENT RISK		RISK OWNER
		(Before Impact)	(Probability)		(After Impact)	(Probability)	
1	The recommendations made by Ofsted will not be implemented	High	High	Limited risk mitigation measures are possible to deal with this	High	High	Children's Services Improvement Board
2	Necessary improvements to the support offered to children in care and care leavers will not be implemented by the Council and partners	High	Med	Improvements could be driven without a strategic framework or the input of young people and partners but this would not be considered good practice	High	Med	Children's Services Improvement Board

Public sector equality duties:

Equalities Impact Assessment attached at Appendix C. Fostering and adoption recruitment strategies include reference to protected characteristics, and strategies to ensure that recruitment of carers is representative and meets the needs of children in care and care leavers.

Advice given by Anne James, Equalities and Community Cohesion Team Leader
Date 16/10/15

Eco impact assessment

There are no significant environmental impacts arising from this proposal. Agreement from Steve Ransom 5/10/2015

Resource and legal implications:

Finance

a. Financial (revenue) implications:

There are small financial implications to publishing the strategy and the pledge as well as to holding a launch event. These are expected to be contained within the current financial budget.

Advice given by Michael Pilcher – Finance Business Partner
Date 12/10/15

b. Financial (capital) implications:

It is not considered that this proposal has any financial capital implications.

Advice given by Michael Pilcher – Finance Business Partner
Date 12/10/15

c. Legal implications:

When a child becomes "looked after" pursuant to a care order or under section 20 Children Act 1989 the role of parenting becomes the corporate responsibility of the City Council. Corporate Parenting places collective responsibility on local authorities to achieve good parenting for all children in care.

Advice given by Sarah Sharland, Senior Solicitor
Date 15/10/15

d. Land / property implications:

N/A

e. Human resources implications:

N/A

Appendices:

Appendix A – Corporate Parenting Strategy

Appendix B – Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers

Appendix C – Equalities Impact Assessment

Access to information (background papers): None

Bristol Corporate Parenting Strategy



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Foreword



Bristol is an exciting and stimulating city to grow up in; offering opportunities for children to play, learn, and develop. It is my vision that *Bristol is a place where the cared for and the caring, young and old, are respected and valued members of our society; and where living healthy, happy and safe lives is the shared aspiration for every citizen.*

This must be the case for our children in care and care leavers. As the city's children, we must make the best opportunities available to them, and care for them as our own children. Alongside partners across the city, I am entirely committed to improving outcomes for children in care and care leavers. This strategy reaffirms this vision and puts positive steps in place to achieve it.

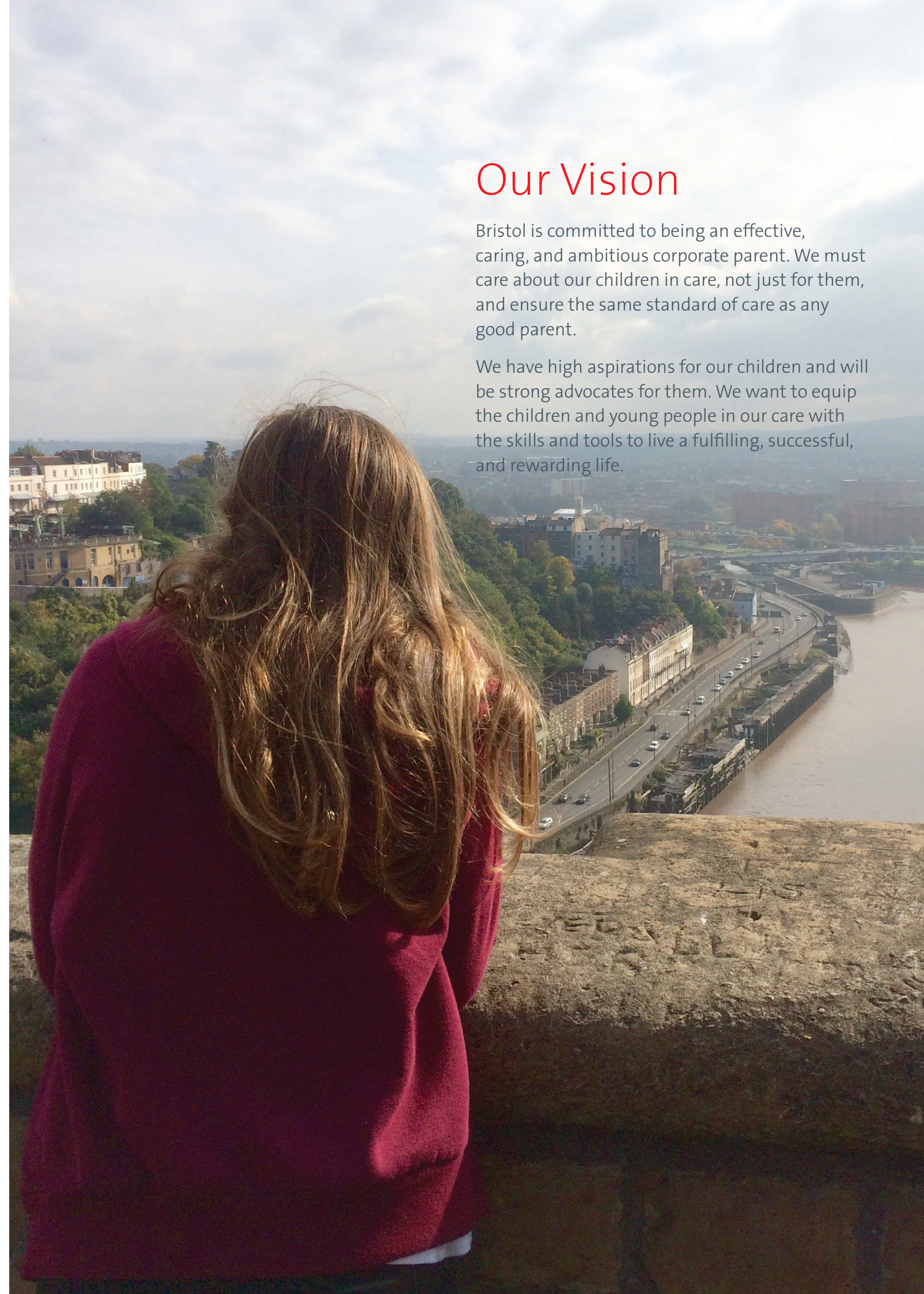
George Ferguson Mayor of Bristol

to be confirmed by the Mayor

Our Vision

Bristol is committed to being an effective, caring, and ambitious corporate parent. We must care about our children in care, not just for them, and ensure the same standard of care as any good parent.

We have high aspirations for our children and will be strong advocates for them. We want to equip the children and young people in our care with the skills and tools to live a fulfilling, successful, and rewarding life.



Introduction

Corporate parenting is the term used to describe our collective responsibility to ensure the best outcomes for the children in the care of Bristol City Council, and those young people who have left our care. Children in care and care leavers are amongst the most vulnerable children and young people in our city. As corporate parents, it is our role to ensure that they are safe, happy, and that they have every opportunity to achieve their full potential.

This strategy describes our approach to improving the lives of the children in our care, outlining our vision and objectives, and how we intend to achieve our goals. We will also outline the context in which this strategy sits, and the governance structure in place to ensure that our vision is achieved.

This strategy sits alongside our Pledge to children in care and care leavers which outlines to children and young people our commitments to them, and the support they can expect from us.

This strategy is part of a broad range of activity both within Bristol City Council and with our partners which supports our aim to improve provision for children in care and care leavers. Other ongoing activity includes:

- A Pledge to Children in Care and Care leavers, informed by what young people themselves have told us
- Multi-agency Corporate Parenting Panel chaired by the Assistant Mayor for People
- An active Children in Care Council to ensure that the voices of young people remain central to our work

- A Corporate Parenting annual report that is presented by children in care to full council
- The HOPE Virtual School actively working to improve educational outcomes for children in care
- Ongoing work to ensure that our corporate parenting responsibilities are embedded in all applicable Council policies
- Specialist Placement Commissioning Plan



Messages from Bristol's children in care

We asked children and young people in care what is important to them, they told us:

- We need the services we appreciate to continue – health assessments at home, access to talking therapies, and the children in care nurse. We'd like better access to gym facilities.
- We want a social worker we like who doesn't keep changing. We'd like a say in who our social worker is.
- We need you to look out for us as you would your own children. We need you to prioritise our education and help us with our homework.
- As we get older, we need you to support us to access good work experience placements and help us into work and training so that we are ready to start living independently when the time is right.
- Our foster carers are really important to us. We'd like to know more about them before moving in with them. We'd like them to encourage us to stay in care, and support us when we move.
- We need you to recognise our achievements and celebrate them. We like that you ask us what we think and listen to us.
- As our parents, we need your support, protection, and encouragement. We need you to be our champions and do everything possible to ensure we achieve as much as we can.

Our Values

Bristol City Council is committed to working in line with the following values:

- The voice of children and young people must be at the heart of service development, policy, practice, and the democratic decision making process;
- The responsibility for ensuring that children in care and care leavers achieve good outcomes lies across the whole of Bristol City Council, as well as with our partners.
- Wherever safe and possible, children and young people should live with their family. We must ensure that the children in our care are only those who need to be in care.
- Prevention and early intervention is a central element of our support for children and families to give them every opportunity to stay together.
- Where care becomes necessary, we will explore options for living with wider family networks wherever possible.
- We will always strive to provide the best quality placement possible, that meets each child's needs and offers placement stability.
- Children in care have the right to access the best education possible and support to meet their full potential.
- We need to continue to support young people as they leave our care and start to live independently.

Context

At a glance:	
Number of Children in care:	695
Rate of Care:	76 per 10,000 children
Number of children in care living with foster families:	587
Number of children in care living outside the local authority area:	251
Number of care leavers:	461

The latest estimate of the Bristol population is 437,500. Bristol has 81,800 children under 16 (18.7% of the population), and 67,400 young people aged 16–24 (15.4% of the population). In the last decade, Bristol’s child population has risen around three times faster than the national average.

The number of Bristol children in care increased by around 8% between 2010 and 2014, which reflects a national rise in care applications. In May 2015, 703 children were in the care of Bristol City Council (a rate of 76 per 10,000 children). This ‘rate of care’ is the average for our statistical neighbour group, but higher than the national average of 60 per 10,000 children.

Of all children in care, 251 (or 36%) live outside the local authority area. Most of our children in care (587 or 84%) live with foster families, of whom 223 (or 38%) live out of the authority area. The majority of those who live out of the area live in adjacent local authorities. 30 children live in residential children’s homes, of whom ten live out of the authority area. 11 children live in residential special schools, of whom five live out of the authority area. 11 are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The percentage of children living in children’s homes or residential special schools remains at 7% (lower than the national average of 9%).

The composition of the children in care population by age has changed over the past year with fewer 14 year olds (26% decrease) and higher numbers of 16–17 year olds (17% increase). The increase in the oldest age group of 16 and 17 year olds has been continuous since 2009 (57% increase). Bristol has a higher percentage of children in care aged 10–17 than the England average.

At 31st March 2014 the ratio of girls to boys in the children in care population was 49% to 51%, very similar to the ratio in previous years. This compares with the national average of 45% girls and 55% boys.

The pattern of ethnicity of the Bristol children in care population is largely unchanged over the past year. In comparison with the Bristol Schools Census of January 2014, children in care at 31 March 2014 were slightly more likely to be white or mixed race and slightly less likely to be Asian than would be suggested by the general population.

The educational achievement of looked after children requires improvement particularly at Key Stage 4. GCSE results have improved over the last three years and are in line with similar authorities. In 2014, 15.3% of Bristol’s children in care obtained five or more GCSE grades A*-C including English and mathematics. This was above the national figure of 12%.

Bristol has 461 care leavers. In addition, 192 young people aged 16 and 17 are looked after, and most of them are eligible for care leaver services. In 2013-14, Bristol had the lowest percentage (50%) of care leavers in education, employment or training of all the eight core cities. Using the same measure Bristol was ranked ninth out of 11 of its statistical neighbours.

Our Objectives

In order to achieve our vision to be a good corporate parent, our aims are to:

- 1 Support more children to live safely with their family and reduce the need to be cared for by intervening early.
- 2 If children cannot remain in their parents’ care, look to their extended family for support first.
- 3 Ensure that children receive the right services and only remain in care for as long as they need to. Make sure that this is informed by an assessment and plan which they and their family understand and which they have been able to contribute to.
- 4 Ensure that being in care is an enriching experience for children and that we equip them for a successful and fulfilling future.
- 5 Ensure enough good quality placements for children by recruiting, retaining and commissioning sufficient foster carers to offer children placement choice, to keep children

placed locally and to achieve high levels of placement stability.

6 Ensure that all young people are in safe and secure accommodation by offering appropriate accommodation to 16-18 year olds who meet the threshold for care.

7 Close the attainment gap for children in care by ensuring that they receive good quality education and that we support them to have high aspirations.

8 Improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers, including increasing the percentage of care leavers in education, employment and training.

9 Improve the health and wellbeing of children in care and care leavers, and provide services of a high standard to support their needs.

Objective 1 – Support more children to live safely with their family and reduce the need to be cared for by intervening early.

It is important to ensure that wherever possible children can live safely with their own family. It is always preferable to provide the necessary support to families to allow children to remain living with their own family than to seek to move them away into care.

Early intervention is key to providing effective support to children and their families, and preventing them from coming into care. This requires a ‘whole-system’ response, with everyone playing their part in supporting families to meet the needs of their children.

Action: Apply the Bristol Threshold Guidance and Managed Pathway to ensure that children

have their needs assessed and met at the earliest possible point of intervention.

Action: Use the Signs of Safety© strengths based approach across the whole system and with our partners, to ensure that families are supported to address problems.

Objective 2 – If children cannot remain in their parents’ care, look to their extended family for support first.

Where it is necessary for a child to become cared for, we will always explore opportunities for the child to remain with their extended family members or people connected to them.

Action: Ensure that the family placement services proactively promotes fostering by family members and connected people.

Objective 3 – Ensure that children receive the right services and only remain in care for as long as they need to. Make sure that this is informed by an assessment and plan which they and their family understand and which they have been able to contribute to.

All children need a permanent family arrangement wherever possible, provided in a timely way. When children enter care we should be focussed on determining the right plan for either their return home, or for their exit from care to a permanent family arrangement. Having a clear and accessible care plan or pathway plan is crucial for children and young people in care. A good plan should ensure that children can access the support they require based on their own needs and circumstances, that they leave care at a time that's right for them, and don't remain in care longer than is necessary.

Action: Ensure that we assess and plan for the needs of all children in care, and that this plan is regularly reviewed to ensure that it meets the child's needs. Ensure that a permanency plan is developed for all children and young people in our care within 4 months of them coming into care.

Action: Quality assure care plans and pathway plans to ensure that they are accessible and have been developed alongside children and young people.

Objective 4 – Ensure that being in care is an enriching experience for children and that we equip them for a successful and fulfilling future.

All children should have access to opportunities to play, socialise, exercise, and learn. Being in care shouldn't mean that children and young people miss out on any opportunities. We need to ensure that children in care in Bristol can access cultural, leisure and social activities and that we encourage them to take part in activities in our communities. We must ensure that our children in care feel part of the city of Bristol and have equal opportunities to learn, play and grow.

Action: Ensure that Bristol is a city where all children and young people have opportunities to play, explore and enjoy.

Objective 5 – Ensure enough good quality placements for children by recruiting, retaining and commissioning sufficient foster carers to offer children placement choice, to keep children placed locally and to achieve high levels of placement stability.

We need to ensure that we can access enough good quality care placements to meet the needs of children coming into care. In order to provide as much stability as possible to children, we need to be able to place children within twenty miles of their home postcode and at a suitable distance so that they can access their existing sources of support, including their family.

We need to proactively recruit foster carers who can meet a diverse range of needs and can accommodate specific children such as brothers and sisters, children with disabilities, and older children.

Action: Ensure that Bristol is a city that actively promotes fostering, and that the needs of those who foster are considered in policy making .

Action: Ensure that the support, training, and financial reimbursement to foster carers is sufficient to attract and retain them.

Objective 6 – Ensure that all young people are in safe and secure accommodation by offering appropriate accommodation to 16–18 year olds who meet the threshold for care.

Bristol is experiencing an increase in the number of 16 and 17 year old coming into care. Wherever possible, we should support young people to stay at home with their families until they are ready to be independent. However, we recognise that some young people will require care and support. We must ensure that we are equipped to support these young people and that we have access to suitable accommodation options for them. For some young people, this may be care options, for others they may be more prepared for independent living options.



Action: When a young person presents as homeless, we will take a One Council approach to ensuring that we assess the needs of 16 and 17 year olds who present as homeless and determine the right plan to meet their needs.

Action: Ensure that housing provision in the city is sufficient to meet the needs of young people who have left home early.

Objective 7 – Close the attainment gap for children in care by ensuring that they receive good quality education and that we support them to have high aspirations.

In order for children and young people to achieve good outcomes, ensuring that they receive good quality education is crucial. We aim to ensure that all children in care are placed in good or outstanding schools wherever possible. We always try to ensure the minimum disruption to children's education when they enter care or move placement.

Action: The Social Worker and School ensure that every child in care has a Personal Education Plan to address their needs and improve educational outcomes, and that their Pupil Premium is spent on the things that will make a difference to them.

Action: The HOPE Virtual School quality assures the Personal Education Plan process to make sure that plans are aspirational, meet the needs of children in care, and that their voice is central to this process.

Action: Hold schools to account for the achievement of the children and young people in our care.

Action: Ask the Learning in Education Challenge Group to determine the strategic actions required to ensure that the attainment gap is reduced for children in care throughout the education system.

Objective 8 – Improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers, including increasing the percentage of care leavers in education, employment and training.

Young people's likelihood of success is much better if they are supported into education, employment and training when they leave care. We recognise that young people who have been in care will often need additional support to access these opportunities, and we are committed to ensuring that this support is available.

Action: Ensure that children in our care are accessing high quality education provision, and that we monitor their educational outcomes and hold education providers to account in meeting their needs.

Action: Lead work in partnership with Learning City Challenge Group to ensure the widest possible range of education and employment opportunities for young people leaving our care

Action: Ensure that children in care and care leavers receive good quality information, advice and guidance, including careers advice and access to relevant work experience.

Objective 9 – Improve the health and wellbeing of children in care and care leavers, and provide services of a high standard to support their needs.

All Children in Care will have an up to date assessment of their health needs, including dental care and emotional health and wellbeing. They will have an agreed action plan to address any concerns; including referral to specialist and targeted services if required.

Action: The health outcomes which are agreed in children's health care action plans will be shared with carers, young people (when appropriate) and other professionals involved in their care.

Action: Ensure that all care leavers have their own health passport in order to support the transition to adult services.

We will

- 1 We have listened to young people, and in order to meet their needs, and achieve our objectives, we will:
- 2 Apply the Bristol Threshold Guidance and Managed Pathway to ensure that children have their needs assessed and met at the earliest possible point of intervention.
- 3 Use the Signs of Safety© strengths based approach across the whole system and with our partners, to ensure that families are supported to address problems.
- 4 Ensure that the family placement services proactively promotes fostering by family members and connected people.
- 5 Ensure that we assess and plan for the needs of all children in care, and that this plan is regularly reviewed to ensure that it meets the child's needs. Ensure that a permanency plan is developed for all children and young people in our care within 4 months of them coming into care.
- 6 Quality assure care plans and pathway plans to ensure that they are accessible and have been developed alongside children and young people
- 7 Ensure that Bristol is a city where all children and young people have opportunities to play, explore and enjoy
- 8 Ensure that Bristol is a city that actively promotes fostering, and that the needs of those who foster are considered in policy making
- 9 Ensure that the support, training, and financial reimbursement to foster carers is sufficient to attract and retain them.
- 10 When a young person presents as homeless, we will take a One Council approach to ensuring that we assess the needs of 16 and 17 year olds who present as homeless and determine the right plan to meet their needs.
- 11 Ensure that housing provision in the city is sufficient to meet the needs of young people who have left home early.
- 12 The Social Worker and School ensure that every child in care has a Personal Education Plan to address their needs and improve educational outcomes, and that their Pupil Premium is spent on the things that will make a difference to them.
- 13 The HOPE Virtual School quality assures the Personal Education Plan process to make sure that plans are aspirational, meet the needs of children in care, and that their voice is central to this process.
- 14 Hold schools to account for the achievement of the children and young people in our care.
- 15 Ask the Learning in Education Challenge Group to determine the strategic actions required to ensure that the attainment gap is reduced for children in care throughout the education system.
- 16 Ensure that children in our care are accessing high quality education provision, and that we monitor their educational outcomes and hold education providers to account in meeting their needs.
- 17 Lead work in partnership with Learning City Challenge Group to ensure the widest possible range of education and employment opportunities for young people leaving our care.
- 18 Ensure that children in care and care leavers receive good quality information, advice and guidance, including careers advice and access to relevant work experience.
- 19 The health outcomes which are agreed in children's health care action plans will be shared with carers, young people (when appropriate) and other professionals involved in their care.
- 20 Ensure that all care leavers have their own health passport in order to support the transition to adult services.

Our Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers





The Bristol Pledge

Partnership to all children in care and care leavers. All adults who work for and with the council have a responsibility to make sure that you are safe, healthy and achieving your goals. This pledge spells out how we promise to do that.

We promise to do our best to help you achieve your full potential. We are committed to involving you in any decisions that affect your life, asking you what you think, listening to you and taking your views into account. This is part of our commitment to making sure that all children are valued in every aspect of their lives.

You said...

Health assessments at home are great

Access to talking therapies is really beneficial

The Children in Care nurse is a really good source of support

Physically and emotionally healthy so that you feel good about yourself

We said...

- Ensure that you get opportunities to meet other young people, have fun, and enjoy your experience in care.
- Help you keep in regular contact with your family members if it is in your best interest.
- Encourage you to have regular health and dental checks.
- Make sure that there is always someone you can talk to about your emotional and physical health and well-being.
- Give you access to high quality sexual health information, advice and support.
- Provide you with information and advice on healthy eating and encourage you to make healthy choices and keep fit.
- If you do anything that is harmful like smoking, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, or harming yourself in any way, we promise to provide you with the advice and support you need.
- Work with you to make health assessments as easy to attend as possible.
- Provide services that can support your emotional health and wellbeing where appropriate.

Safe from harm, valued, cared for and supported



You said...

We need someone who will believe and value us, independent visitors are really important.

We'd like to have a say in who our social worker is and see them regularly

We think we should be supported into independent living by our foster carers, and encouraged to stay in care if that is what would be best for us

We promise to...

- Make sure that you know your social worker well, see them regularly and can contact them when you want. We will agree with you how often you can expect to see your social worker, and will explore other ways to stay in touch
- Not change your social worker unless it is absolutely necessary. If we do change your social worker, we will ask you about yourself and your interests to help us find a social worker who's right for you
- Make sure you feel safe in your home and are happy where you live
- Support you if you return to your family or move to another home
- Try to keep you safe from bullying and to take action if you tell us that you are being bullied
- Make sure there is an up-to-date care plan that is clear about your needs and how we will support you
- Involve you in planning services and explain our decisions fully
- Make sure that you have an independent reviewing officer to help plan with you what you need and check that those plans are carried out at least every 6 months. Involve you in planning your review so that you feel part of it and feel confident raising any issues
- Make sure you have access to a telephone and computer, and that you have all the contact details you need including your social worker, your advocate, emergency services and Childline
- Ensure that you have access to an independent visitor if appropriate
- Work with your foster carer or another adult to represent you well in your review
- Provide you with information about advocacy services who are independent from the council and can represent you, when you go into care

The best education

We promise to...

- Make sure that you have a good education
- Make sure that pre-school children in care are able to receive early years education
- Draw up a regular Personal Education Plan with you to encourage you to have high ambitions and help you get the best results you can. Ensure that your voice is captured through the Personal Education Plan process
- Make sure everyone does what they say they will do in your Personal Education Plan
- Work with your school or college to help you do your best
- Help you learn English if it's not your first language
- Make sure you have your own reading material at home
- Support you to attend and do well at school
- Give you support to access activities which take place outside normal lessons and to make sure you have somewhere to study and do your homework
- Make sure you get extra study support if you need or want it
- Talk to you about where you would rather go to school. Support you to stay in your current school unless there are good reasons not to, and avoid moving you during important educational periods wherever possible
- Make sure that you have access to a computer, and explore options for accessing one if you currently don't
- Ensure you can access good work experience placements, even if your school doesn't offer them and commit to asking you about your work experience plans through your Personal Education Plan

- Ensure that you are part of the decisions about what your pupil premium is spent on
- Ensure you have someone you can talk to about careers and education

You said...

Work experience is hard to access; we need your help to find placements

It's important to have someone to talk to about careers and education, and who pushes us to do our best

Promises in our Personal Education Plans must be kept and we would like to be involved in deciding what our pupil premium is spent on

It's important to have someone to talk to about careers and education, and who pushes us to do our best

Stability during important educational periods like exams is really important

Have a voice and take part

We promise to...

- Encourage you to go to museums, libraries and youth clubs and to get involved in sports you enjoy
- Celebrate your achievements
- Give you opportunities to do volunteer work
- Listen to you and tell you how your views influence what we do
- Provide you with other opportunities to come together and represent your views and the views of other children in care and care leavers.
- Meet your religious and cultural needs, and ensure you have the opportunity to meet with other people who share your way of life or background
- Involve you in the recruitment of staff and train our staff to listen well to young people
- Support the R Voice magazine, which is created by and for children in Bristol's care

- Seek your views through the R-Voice website
- Refresh the R-Voice website so that you can access news and information as well as the pledge and other information easily
- Introduce you to the R Voice website when you first come into care
- Make sure that an independent advocate is available to talk to if you need to
- Make sure you have the opportunity to contribute to your review
- Give you an independent visitor if you need one
- Continue to arrange events and opportunities for looked after children to come together
- Extend the care leaver's ambassador programme to implement a buddying system between looked after children and care leavers
- Recognise your achievements and support you to achieve your goals
- Ensure that all Council owned policies consider children in care where appropriate

You said...

We would like a buddying system with older looked after children and care leavers

It's really important to support us to have our voice heard. Awards and recognition are also really important

We'd like to receive a copy of the pledge when we come into care

We want to have a say in our Looked After Child review

We want to get together with other looked after children



You said...

We'd like to meet carers before moving in with them so that we can get to know them

We would like to meet other children living with foster carers as part of our induction to their home

We want to have fun with our foster carers, and would like to be matched with our carers based on our interests and hobbies

Know who you will live with

We will...

- Have a wide range of foster carers that reflect the diverse needs of young people in care in Bristol
- Ensure that children and young people who need to or choose to live in a children's home, are placed in homes that meet their needs
- Only offer you a home outside the city if we really need to
- Match you to foster carers who best meet your needs for as long as you need
- Try to match you to a placement as near to your home as possible, but definitely within twenty miles
- When a long term placement is not immediately available, and we offer a shorter term placement, we will work with you to identify a longer term placement, this will include ensuring that you see a profile of the families we are considering for you to live with, and make sure that information about other children you will live with is included
- Ensure that your foster carers are trained and supported to care for you
- Involve you in the recruitment and training of foster carers and listen to your views about what makes a good foster carer
- Talk to you about your interests and hobbies before placing you with foster carers wherever possible

Becoming independent – A good standard of living and opportunities to develop and prepare for your future

We will...

- Hold high aspirations and help you to achieve your goals. If things don't work out, we will support you to try again
- Ensure you have a named worker who stays with you throughout your time as a care leaver
- Provide you with the information that you need at every point in your journey, from care to adulthood
- Ensure you have support to start thinking about leaving care when you're ready
- Plan with you about when to leave care and identify what support you will need and who will provide it – this is called your Pathway Plan
- Help you prepare for independence and practice your independence skills by helping you to budget, cook, clean and experience what it might be like to live independently
- Ensure you have somewhere safe and suitable to live with the right level of housing support
- Provide you with an education, employment or training offer that's right for you. We will match your aspiration and ability to an opportunity that's right for you, whether

that's work experience or an apprenticeship with the Council, working in retail or pursuing performing arts. Whatever you're interested in, we'll do our best to link you with the right opportunity and provide you with the support to help you achieve

- Give you the practical, financial and emotional support you need to progress to further or higher education
- Give every young person a health passport so that you have your health record and know where to go for help
- Make sure you have a bank account and all identification documents before you leave care
- Support you to stay in touch with family and friends
- Provide you with information about your history and support to access it when you want it
- Provide you with the financial assistance and practical support to set up home
- Make sure you can get support from the people who can help you best, at the times you need it
- Celebrate your achievements

You said...

We need support to move out of care and to successfully start living independently

We'd like to have a say in who our social worker is and see them regularly

We think we should be supported into independent living by our foster carers, and encouraged to stay in care if that is what would be best for us

Glossary

Care plan A plan about what the young person wants and needs during their time in care. The care plan includes important information like a health plan and a personal education plan. At 16 this becomes a pathway plan and focuses on transition to adulthood

Children in care All children being looked after by a local authority, including those subject to care orders under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 and those looked after on a voluntary basis through an agreement with their parents.

Care leavers All young people who have been looked after by Bristol for more than 13 weeks between their 14th and 16th birthdays (excluding short respite care placements) and who are still looked after on their 16th birthdays will receive support from the Care and After team, and are considered to be 'care leavers'.

Children in Care Council The Children in Care Council gives young people a chance to have their say and gives young people the chance to talk to the people who run the care system.

Designated Teacher A teacher whose job is to help young people in care to do as well in school as other young people. Each school and educational setting has a designated teacher who knows who is in care and looks after their best interests.

'Everyone Active' Card A card that allows you to get involved in an extensive range of activities including sporting FUNdamentals, swimming lessons and other organised activities across the city.

Fair Comment Fair Comment is the official complaint/comment system for Bristol City Council

Health Care Assessment An annual check of your physical health and emotional wellbeing for any child in care and care leaver over five years old. This can take place either at the doctor, or with a specialist nurse. A list of any actions needed to

make sure you stay healthy will be agreed with you and will be shared with your social carer, foster carer and other professionals who are responsible for looking after you.

Independent Advocate Advocates can help young people know their rights and make sure that their views and wishes are heard at all times. If you wish to get in contact with an advocate, please ask your Social Worker or contact Reconstruct directly.

Independent Reviewing Officer A professional who co-ordinates the review meeting between a young person and care professionals in order to improve the care plan for the young person.

Independent Visitor An independent visitor is a trained volunteer who visits a child in care, talks to them, becomes their friend and gives them support when they need it. If you are interested in getting a visitor, please talk to your Social Worker.

Pathway Plan A plan that outlines the services and the practical and emotional support that young people aged 16 and over (care leavers) require, so that they are able to make a successful transition from living in care to a more independent lifestyle.

Personal Education Plan Often called a 'PEP', this plan is an agreement between the child, their social worker, their school, carers and parents. The plan will include what needs to be done in order for you to reach your full potential at school.

R-Voice A Bristol magazine designed and written by children in care and care leavers from across the city. Two magazines are published every few months, one for those aged under 12, and one for children aged 12 and over.

R-Voice online The website designed by children in care and care leavers, for children in care and care leavers. The web address is www.rvoice.co.uk

We The Pledge is a promise from all of the agencies represented across the Children and Families Board.

Your feedback

We welcome your feedback on the pledge and are very interested in hearing your views, whether they are positive or negative. If you wish to share your experiences please get in touch with either the R Voice magazine/website or the Children in Care Council. You can also give your views on how we are performing on the Pledge during your review.

This document is available in other languages. Please visit the R Voice website for more details www.rvoice.co.uk

Want to get in touch with or join the Children in Care Council?

The Children in Care Council aims to reflect the views of all children in care and care leavers in Bristol, and strives to achieve change and better outcomes for all children and young people in care. Contact www.rvoice.co.uk/contact

Want to write for the R-Voice Magazine/Website?

The website and magazine is written by children in care, for children in care. If you would like to contribute, contact www.rvoice.co.uk/contact

Need an Independent Advocate?

Advocates can help young people know their rights and make sure that their views and wishes are heard at all times. If you are making a complaint, advocates can help and support you through the process

Want to meet an Independent Visitor?

An Independent Visitor befriends a young person in the care system. They spend a few hours a week together, sharing interests and activities

How to make a complaint

You can make a complaint or provide feedback through Bristol City Council's complaints procedure https://services.bristol.gov.uk/home/-/item/iagpage/57?p_auth=GY5Z5HhA



Bristol City Council Equality Impact Assessment Form

(Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this form)



Name of proposal	Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers
Directorate and Service Area	People Directorate
Name of Lead Officer	John Readman & Angela Clarke

Step 1: What is the proposal?

Please explain your proposal in Plain English, avoiding acronyms and jargon. This section should explain how the proposal will impact service users, staff and/or the wider community.

1.1 What is the proposal?

The new Corporate Parenting Strategy has been developed as part of the Children's Services Improvement Plan, which draws together the Council's response to the 2014 Ofsted Inspection of Bristol's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. Action 9 of the Children's Service Improvement Plan is to:

Publish and implement an updated Corporate Parenting Strategy including refreshing the Children in Care and Care Leavers Pledge, that identifies priorities for improvement in the quality and coordination of services.

Bristol City Council currently has a Children in Care and Care Leavers Pledge which was developed in 2010, and publishes a Children in Care annual report each year. There is currently no specific Corporate Parenting Strategy, although there are a range of associated documents.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines how we intend to improve support for children in care and care leavers. The aim of the new Strategy is to capture Bristol City Council's corporate aims and ambitions in relation to our corporate parenting responsibilities. This document outlines our vision, aims, and actions, as well as demonstrating how we will improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

Alongside the new Strategy, the Council's Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers has been updated since its' original development in 2010 to include feedback from young people gained through focus groups, a survey of young people in care and care leavers, and in consultation with young people at the Corporate Parenting Panel. The Pledge is a document for children and young people themselves, outlining our commitments to them and the services and support they can expect while they are in care and when they become care leavers. Most notably, the pledge now includes a section specifically for Care Leavers, outlining what young people can expect from us when they leave care.

It is important that the Pledge is accessible to young people and that they are aware of its existence. Further work will be required with foster carers and Independent Reviewing Officers to ensure that children and young people are aware of the pledge.

While the Corporate Parenting Strategy is a strategic document whose audience is Bristol City Council and our partners, the Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers should be an accessible document for children and young people in care and coming into care.

Step 2: What information do we have?

Decisions must be evidence-based, and involve people with protected characteristics that could be affected. Please use this section to demonstrate understanding of who could be affected by the proposal.

2.1 What data or evidence is there which tells us who is, or could be affected?

In May 2015, 703 children were in the care of Bristol City Council (a rate of 76 per 10,000 children). This 'rate of care' is the average for our statistical neighbour group, but higher than the national average of 60 per 10,000 children.

Of all children in care, 251 (or 36%) live outside the local authority area. Most of our children in care (587 or 84%) live with foster families, of whom 223 (or 38%) live out of the authority area. The majority of those who live out of the area live in adjacent local authorities. 30 children live in residential children's homes, of whom ten live out of the authority area. 11 children live in residential special schools, of whom five live out of the authority area. 11 are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The percentage of children living in children's homes or residential special schools remains at 7% (lower than the national average of 9%).

Age

The composition of the children in care population by age has changed over the past year with fewer 14 year olds (26% decrease) and higher numbers of 16-17 year olds (17% increase). The increase in the oldest age group of 16 and 17 year olds has been continuous since 2009 (57% increase). Bristol has a higher percentage of children in care aged 10-17 than the England average.

Bristol has 461 care leavers. In addition, 192 young people aged 16 and 17 are looked after, and most of them are eligible for care leaver services.

Gender

At 31st March 2014 the ratio of girls to boys in the children in care population was 49% to 51%, very similar to the ratio in previous years. This compares with the national average of 45% girls and 55% boys. There has been a steady increase since 2009 in the number of girls looked after aged 16-17 but the upward trend for girls aged 10-15 has reversed this in 2013-14. The numbers of boys in care aged 16-17 has increased each year since 2009.

Race

The pattern of ethnicity of the Bristol children in care population is largely unchanged over the past year. In comparison with the Bristol Schools Census of January 2014, children in care at 31 March 2014 were slightly more likely to be white or mixed race and slightly less likely to be Asian than would be suggested by the general population.

Bristol continues to record very low numbers of children with a category of need of 'absent parenting'. This may be due to the very low numbers of children recorded as being Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

Disability

In England as a whole 66% of children in care have SEN (special educational needs). This is similar to Bristol where 65% of children in care have SEN compared to 18% of Bristol children generally. A third of Bristol's children in care have a statement of SEN or an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan) compared to just 2.7% for all children in Bristol. 32% of Bristol children in care have SEN but no statement / EHCP (i.e. they are either classed as "school action" or "school action plus").

It is estimated that 40% of children in care have significant emotional ill health, much of which is shown in conduct disorder. Many of these children have experienced abuse, neglect, and removal from their family. Figures from the Bristol Deliberate Self-harm Service in 2013 show that 17.69% (26 out of 147) of referrals seen by the team relate to children in care.

National figures in relation to disability suggest that disabled children are nine times more likely to become looked after than non-disabled children. About a quarter of all looked after children are disabled. Approximately 40 percent of children waiting for a new permanent family have an impairment or some form of special need. Children with learning disabilities are the children for whom it is the most difficult to find permanent families. Many disabled children awaiting permanent placements are under five, two-thirds are boys, and most are white.

2.2 Who is missing? Are there any gaps in the data?

The data in the Children in Care population analysis does not include local information about children's religion, disability (other than SEN), gender reassignment or sexual orientation.

2.3 How have we involved, or will we involve, communities and groups that could be affected?

The Strategy and Pledge have been developed in consultation with a range of partners and the voices of young people have been central to the development of both documents. Messages from children in care were gleaned through a session at Corporate Parenting Panel with young people in care, and a survey of children in care and care leavers. The aim is to respond to their priorities through the strategic actions outlined in the Strategy, and the more tangible commitments outlined in the Pledge. Further consultation will be taking place with the Children in Care Council to review the commitments in the Pledge and ensure that they address their priorities.

Step 3: Who might the proposal impact?

Age

There is a growing number of older children entering care in Bristol which poses the challenge of securing appropriate accommodation for this population. Young people in England are now able to stay with their foster carers until the age of 21. This will improve outcomes for young people who have previously faced the prospect of living alone too soon. We will need to continually recruit carers to allow current carers to keep their foster children living with them longer. Bristol City Council's 2015-16 Fostering Recruitment Strategy aims to recruit more experienced carers who can look after more challenging children and young people, including teenagers. In addition, Bristol City Council's aim is to ensure that all children in care under 10 are placed with in-house carers by recruiting and developing our current pool of carers.

Carers nationwide are an ageing population, with 13% retiring every year. Bristol's rate is currently at 6%. Typically, fostering has appealed to women aged 35 and above, but more and more women aged 40 and over have other caring responsibilities which could reduce their likelihood to choose fostering as a career. Nationally 30 per cent of carers are aged 55 or above, with another 45 per cent between 45 and 54. In contrast, only 4 per cent were aged 21 to 34. The recruitment of younger foster carers could support longer retention of foster carers.

Disability

Factors that lead to a disabled child becoming looked after are complex, inter-woven and difficult to extrapolate. Factors include family stress, abuse or neglect, and parental illness. The literature states that disabled looked after children are more likely to be voluntarily accommodated than subject to a care order. However, it is reported that disabled children experience a heightened vulnerability to abuse¹.

Bristol has 44 registered short break carers for disabled children. A specific objective in Bristol City Council's 2015-16 Fostering Recruitment Strategy is to recruit more carers who can care for disabled children, including short breaks and contract short break care. Bristol City Council's 'Diversity and Equality in fostering and adoption recruitment' statement makes a commitment to recruit disabled foster carers and adopters. The intention is to reflect carers with disabilities in recruitment material, and using myth busting as part of recruitment strategies.

¹ Dowling, S., Kelly, B. & Winter, K. (2012) Disabled Children and Young People who are Looked After: A Literature Review. Belfast: Queen's University Belfast.

Marriage and civil partnership

It is important to highlight to potential foster carers that they do not need to be married in order to foster, and that single people can foster too, as well as those in civil partnerships, and living with their partner. All Bristol City Council fostering and adoption recruitment material will emphasise this.

Pregnancy & maternity

The principal risk factors associated with teenage pregnancy, such as socio-economic deprivation; limited involvement in education; low educational attainment; limited access to consistent, positive adult support; being a child of a teenage mother; low self-esteem; and experience of sexual abuse, are to be found more often in the looked after population than among children and young people who are not in care².

Almost a quarter of girls (22%) in care in England become teenage mothers, according to the Centre for Social Justice, around three times the average rates. The figures also suggest at least one in 10 care-leavers who become parents have their children taken into care.

Increased capacity to care for teenage parents is therefore necessary, as well as preventative initiatives to reduce rates of teenage pregnancy. A Bristol campaign is planned for 2015-16 to encourage an increase in mother and baby fostering.

Race/ethnicity

An increasing number of asylum seeking children are beginning to have an impact on the profile of looked-after children. Many of these children may have been traumatised and living in very stressful circumstances, which means that they often need more specialist care. Asylum seeking children will increasingly make up some of Bristol's looked after children population. At end of March 2015, 16 children were Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking minors. This is likely to rise following increases in global migration of young people.

There are no significant differences in placement breakdown between children placed with carers from a similar background to their own and those placed with white families.

Good foster care matching processes are associated with better outcomes for looked after children and young people. Ideally, research suggests that these processes should include attention to the characteristics of foster parents or key carers, so that care givers and

² SCIE Research briefing 9: Preventing teenage pregnancy in looked after children

children can be beneficially matched in order to avoid unnecessary discord, friction, confrontation, and placement breakdown³.

Bristol City Council's 'Diversity and Equality in fostering and adoption recruitment' statement makes a commitment to recruiting more foster carers from black and minority ethnic backgrounds in order to better reflect the ethnicity of children in care through the following recruitment strategies:

- Joint working with BAME organisations- Bristol Multi Faith Forum/ BME Voscur, focus groups with current carers/adopters, meetings with adoption agencies, councillors and BAME organisations, Tower Hamlets mentoring relationship
- Advertising and radio interviews on Ujima, BCFM and Ramdan radio
- Recruitment stands at schools with high BAME population
- Working with BAME Councillors to promote fostering
- Meeting with Somali and Polish groups (fastest growing BAME population in Bristol)
- Basic information on fostering provided in Somali and Polish- available at recruitment events
- Attendance at Black History Month awards- nomination of our black carers 2013/14
- Advertising in Black History Month leaflet of events 2015
- Mailout to all schools for Black History Month with famous BAME people who have been in care or adopted.
- Specific leaflet with BAME imagery developed
- Lead the way campaign- encouraging faith and community leaders as well as councillors to learn about fostering and adoption and cascade this to communities

Religion and belief

We need to be aware of the importance to some children and young people of the religious observance of their family's traditional religion. Not all children and young people will feel strongly about their religion, but some will. In line with our fostering recruitment strategy, recruiting a diverse range of carers who can support children and young people from a variety of religions and beliefs is important. In order to do this, we have committed to:

- Working specifically with Muslim communities to provide appropriate and relevant information, spreading the word for the need for a diverse population of carers
- Holding information stands at church events
- Involvement with Home for Good organisation in relation to Adoption Sunday and unaccompanied asylum seeking young people
- Working with Bristol multi faith Forum around events and networking

³ SSIA, What Works in Promoting Good Outcomes for Looked After Children and Young People?

Sex

There are slightly more boys than girls in care in Bristol, which reflects the national demographic profile. As explored above, one of the risks for girls in care is teenage pregnancy. 4YP Bristol has developed prevention initiatives with the aim of decreasing teenage pregnancy rates as well as a teenage pregnancy outreach nurse to support young parents.

In terms of educational outcomes, looked after girls generally outperform looked after boys which mirrors patterns of attainment in the general population. The HOPE Virtual School aims to increase the educational attainment of all looked after children.

Sexual Orientation and Gender reassignment

Research by Action for Children in 2013 revealed that 32% of LGBT people in the UK believe that being LGBT means you cannot foster, a misconception which must be challenged⁴. The increased recruitment of lesbians and gay men as foster carers and adopters has been influenced by the view that for children, it is the quality of the adult-child relationship that matters rather than the structure of their family, or the sexual orientation of their parents⁵. Bristol City Council aims to increase the number of LGBT people registering as foster carers by:

- Holding a week-long campaign targeting potential LGBT foster carers
- Utilising press and media opportunities around National LGBT fostering week
- Holding open information sessions with LGBT communities
- Having a stand at Pride for adoption and fostering
- Ensuring New Family Social materials are available at all recruitment events

Step 4: So what?

The Equality Impact Assessment must be able to influence the proposal and decision. This section asks how your understanding of impacts on people with protected characteristics has influenced your proposal, and how the findings of your Equality Impact Assessment can be measured going forward.

4.1 How has the equality impact assessment informed or changed the proposal and what actions have been identified going forward?

Actions to address the identified issues relating to each protected characteristic have been

⁴ <http://www.lgbtadoptfosterweek.org.uk/uncategorized/press-release-lgbt-people-urged-to-consider-fostering-and-adoption/>

⁵ e.g. Golombok, 2000

identified above.

4.2 How will the impact of your proposal and actions be measured moving forward?

The implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and pledge to Children in care and Care Leavers will be monitored through the applicable multi-agency board – Learning City Partnership Board, Health and Wellbeing Board, and the Safeguarding Children Board.

Service Director Sign-Off: Anne Farmer	Equalities Officer Sign Off: Anne James Equality and Community Cohesion Team Leader
Date: 21/10/15	Date: 16 October 2015