



Suffolk Strategy for Care Leavers 2020-2023

Foreword

Message from Mary Evans & Allan Cadzow



Cabinet Member for
Children's Services



Corporate Director for
Children & Young People

Dear colleague,

This Strategy provides the foundation of our aspiration for young people leaving care. In Suffolk we believe that corporate parenting is one of the most important responsibilities held by elected members, partner agencies and all our staff.

This means that every child in care and care leaver should be listened to, cared for, feel safe, be healthy, receive the best education and have every opportunity to be independent and successful. As corporate parents we need to always ask ourselves “is this good enough for my child?” and hold us, and each other, to this standard. All services need to go over and above to help give care leavers a voice and enable them to succeed. We need all our children to be cared for and cared about.

We must ensure we have close, co-ordinated working relationships with partners if we are to succeed in improving outcomes for our children – now and in the future. We must know our children well and listen to what they are telling us.

We are ambitious for all our children in care and care leavers.

Kind regards



Councillor Mary Evans
Cabinet Member for Children's
Services



Allan Cadzow
Corporate Director for Children &
Young People

Foreword by Our Voice Group



Dear Reader,

Coming into care can be a difficult experience for children and young people. We want our Corporate Parents to be committed to ensuring that children in care and care leavers are offered the same level of care and support as other young people would receive from their parents.

We want to work closely with our Corporate Parents and partners to ensure our priorities for children and care leavers are upheld - by working with us and listening to our voices and through consultation with C2C and Our voice groups. We want a strategic plan that makes a difference and improves the quality of our lives, taking into consideration our education, housing, health and emotional needs and a service that really gets to know our views and experiences.

The relationship between a young person and their social worker or young person's advisor is very important. We want our Corporate Parents to recognise the significance of this role to enable us to develop a trusting relationship and strong bond.

We want to become confident young adults with increased future prospects and improved stability to enhanced lives

On behalf of the Our Voice Care Leaver Group

Voice of Young People

We are committed to co-production with children and young people, parents and carers. We spoke to young people about their care leaving experience and this is what they said.

I was volunteering for a while and worried that I wasn't going to get anywhere. I was supported to apply for the job, coached with my interview, and now I couldn't be happy

We need people who go above and beyond to show us love and that they care. Help us build relationships with people who can support us and be there for us.

I was supported to make my own decisions and I'm now happy with my part time job and take part in education activities

Let us follow our dreams. Have aspirations for us. Help us to see what we can achieve

I move out today from supported living in my own flat. I've been waiting a LONG time for this and my worker has helped me be patient as you don't know how long it can take sometimes

When we become a care leaver at 16, don't put us in accommodation with other people who are going to be a bad influence or exploit us. Supported Lodgings are a good step towards independence.

Let us follow our dreams. Have aspirations for us. Help us to see that we can achieve, go to University if we want to, but not just in education, in sports, the Arts, community activities, Scouts, Cubs, Guides, Brownies, Cadets.....

Make sure there is always someone that we can go to and talk to. Being a care leaver can be a lonely place.

Involve us in the decision making about where we are going to live and in planning the move



Introduction

The profile of care leavers is changing. More children come into care as adolescents, and the profile of UASC is increasing. We are supporting an increasing number of care leavers, and we expect these numbers to grow. The Leaving Care Service is currently supporting 601 children in care and care leavers.

This Strategy builds on several areas of policy:

- The key policy framework for care leavers – 2016's [Keep on Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence](#), and 2018's [Support for Care Leavers](#).
- Responsibilities for care leavers, which were extended in the [Children & Social Work Act 2017](#), extending corporate parenting responsibilities to all local authorities and extending support to 25 year old's.
- The National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers published his [first annual report into the care leavers' landscape](#) in December 2018.
- Suffolk's existing [Local Offer](#) to care leavers, which details the services and support available.

Corporate Parenting Principles

The Children & Social Work Act 2017 extends the duties on all local authorities (including District and Borough Councils) to have regard to a set of corporate parenting principles when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and care leavers up to the age of 25.

- To act in the best interest, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people.
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships, and education or work.
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Partnership

This Strategy sets out our ambition for our care leavers. As an authority and corporate parent, we know that we cannot secure the best outcomes alone. We need the support of the whole Suffolk System. We will work together to be the best corporate parent we can be.

Governance

The Corporate Parenting Board is a multi-agency partnership led by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education. The Board will report annually to Cabinet on the Strategy.

The Care Leavers Strategy Group will report twice yearly to the Corporate Parenting Board and CYP DMT. Each Outcome Lead will sit on the Care Leavers Strategy Group. The Care Leavers Strategy Group will be chaired by the Assistant Director, Social Care & Youth Justice



Our Vision

All children and families in Suffolk have the right to:

- be safe
- the best education
- physical and emotional health
- successful preparation for adulthood and employment.

We will be aspirational for all young people in care and leaving care

Promise to Care Leavers

Our [Promise to Care Leavers](#) sets out our commitment to care leavers and what we will do to achieve this. Delivering on the promises to care leavers is the foundation of our work. The Promise will be discussed with care leavers to make sure the promises are being kept for them.

- We will help you to do the best you possibly can in your education, training or employment.
- We will help you find a home where you are safe, well cared for and can be happy.

- We will help you to be as healthy and happy as you can be
- We will work with you to give you all the help and support you need to make a success of moving on from care to adult life.
- We will help you follow your interests and hobbies and to be the best you possibly can.
- We will help you to see your family, friends and other people who are important to you

Outcomes for Care Leavers

Keep on Caring set out 5 key outcomes, which have been adopted by the National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers.

We have adopted the following outcomes for Suffolk, based on our Promise and taking into account *Keep on Caring*. We have adopted an additional outcome

Outcome 1: Improve access to education, employment and training.

Suffolk Promise: We will help you to do your very best in education, training, and employment

Outcome 2: Care leavers should experience stability in their lives and feel safe and secure.

Suffolk Promise: We will help you find a home where you are safe, well cared for and can be happy

Outcome 3: Improved access to health support.

Suffolk Promise We will help you to stay healthy, well and happy as you can be

Outcome 4: Care leavers should achieve financial stability and independence

Suffolk Promise: We will work with you to give you all the help and support you need to make a success of moving on from care to adult life

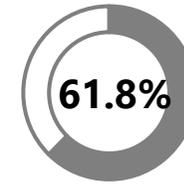
Outcome 5: Experience strong family networks and be the best they can be

Suffolk Promise: We will help you follow your interests and hobbies and be the best you can be

Suffolk Promise: We will help you see your family, friends and other people who are important to you

Outcome 6: Being the best corporate parent we can be.

Outcome 1: Education, Employment & Training



Care leavers in education, employment or training (EET) (Former Relevant 17-21yr)

What we have achieved:

- We have an ongoing work experience brokerage with John Lewis
- We have care leaver apprenticeships in place with our District & Borough Councils and Suffolk County Council
- We have an apprentice in our Leaving Care Service
- We have piloted a single point of contact protocol with DWP
- We have established a Pathway to EET Panel, which commenced April 2020
- All Suffolk care leavers, meeting essential criteria, are guaranteed a job interview, and we ask all our contractors to do the same
- We have a re-engagement offer, offering Bushcraft skills, woodland residentials, and training expeditions to test and develop emotional resilience of care leavers

Our Further Ambition:

- We will develop a tailored offer with University of Suffolk for care leavers to access higher education.
- As a partnership between Suffolk, Norfolk and Hertfordshire local authorities, we will develop a new post responsible for raising the profile of care leavers accessing higher education
- We will develop and implement a multi-agency Pathway to Education and Training (P2E) panel to track and support 16 and 17 years old into education, training and employment
- We will deliver the Work Well Suffolk project that tackles deep seated barriers to work
- We will provide guaranteed interviews for care leavers in Suffolk County Council and partner agencies, who will offer at least two apprenticeship opportunities to care leavers
- We will increase the percentage of young people in employment, education and training

- We will ensure UASC can access ESOL provision and develop additional accredited ESOL providers that also offer full time courses for age 19+
- We will work towards extending the role of Virtual School to provide additional support for post 18

Outcome 2: Experience stability, feel safe and secure



95.6%

Care leavers in suitable accommodation (Former Relevant 17-21yr)

What we have achieved:

- Our Staying Close pilot is successfully supporting 60 care leavers who have moved from residential care; of the 34 supported to move-on in the last 12 months 33 have sustained their tenancies
- Care leavers (and foster carers) are supported for young people to 'Stay Put', resulting in 80% continuing to live with carers post-18
- We have 95.6% of care leavers in suitable accommodation
- We have robust quality accommodation standards for all care leavers aged 16/17
- We have appointed a Specialist YPA for homeless care leavers
- We have a multi-agency Transitions Panel in place to support care leavers to be independent and suitably accommodated

Our Further Ambition:

- We will work with partners to avoid placements of care leavers in B&B
- We will work with partners to remove the ability for care leavers to be found intentionally homeless
- We will prevent homelessness of care leavers
- We will prioritise the needs of care leavers for affordable, suitable and sustainable housing
- We will work with partners to quality assure semi-independent accommodation for care leavers
- We will work in partnership to ensure care leavers at risk of exploitation and harm are identified and protected
- We will develop a "second chance" scheme with District & Boroughs
- We will support the expansion of Staying Close to support young people moving on from semi-independent living

Outcome 3: Improved access to health



What we have achieved:

- We have two CiC Emotional Health & Wellbeing Lead nurses in place
- We provide work experience for care leavers within NHS settings
- We have developed health summaries for care leavers when they reach 18.
- We offer a nurse led service for young people over 18 should it be required, which offers information, advice and signposting to adult services
- We have obtained free access to leisure for care leavers residing in the west of the county.

Our Further Ambition:

- Each child in care and are leaver to be entitled to free access to a range of sports and leisure opportunities
- We will work with partners to redesign mental health services to ensure that care leavers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) have appropriate access to emotional wellbeing services from 16-25
- We will ensure care leavers who become parents are supported.
- We will improve the training and process of SDQs to ensure we have a more accurate insight into a young person's wellbeing.

Outcome 4: Financial stability and independence



Our successes:

- We have a strong local offer
- We have agreed council tax exemption with all our districts and boroughs for care leavers to age 25
- 'Our Voice' have produced a cookbook, which has been published for all care leavers
- We have developed 'Welcome to Your New Home' packs for care leavers
- We have negotiated discounted furniture and white goods from Ipswich Furniture Project
- We have in place a dedicated Housing PA to provide information to young people in need of housing advice

Our Further Ambition:

- We will secure free or discounted travel in public transport for care leavers
- We will broaden Council Tax exemption for Care leavers that do not reside in the local area; this will be in line with offers from comparable local authorities
- We will increase the setting up home allowance (SUHA) to be more in line with comparable local authorities
- We will provide financial advice and tenancy training for all care leavers
- Continue to develop and review our local offer to support young people's independence in accordance with their wishes.
- We will have a pathway plan in place for 100% of care leavers

Outcome 5: Experience strong family networks and be the best you can be



Care leavers in touch (Former Relevant 17-21yr)



What we have achieved:

- Development of the Grand Mentors model in and around Ipswich. More than 50 mentors have been identified and matches are an ongoing process.
- We have an offer of outdoor pursuits to bring young people together and encourage new friendships
- We have residential breaks and expeditions planned and fully funded for 2020

Our Further Ambition:

- We will ensure care leavers have a network of people that support and care about them
- We will increase numbers of care leavers we are in touch with
- We will ensure care leavers can experience activities and celebration events
- UASC (16-21) to receive allowance to travel outside of Suffolk to connect with extended family and friends from their community
- We will ensure care leavers have support from mentors and peers
- We will work with partners to enable discounted entrance to entertainment venues in Suffolk
- We will support care leavers to parent well
- Signs of Safety 'Mapping' process [piloted successfully in West Suffolk] to be rolled out across the county

Outcome 6: Be the best corporate parent



What we have achieved:

- We have expanded our membership of the Board to include the DWP and strengthened District & Borough membership
- Ofsted praised our strong corporate parenting ethos
- We have a robust CiC & Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy that is scrutinised at each meeting
- Our care leavers are represented within C2C and attend Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) twice yearly.

Our Further Ambition:

- We will review our Corporate Parenting Board and make key recommendations
- We will work to develop a Care Leaver ambassador role
- We will aim to have a care leaver sit on the CPB
- We will nominate to Champion roles for members of the CPB and SCC CLT
- We will own and develop the Care Leaver Covenant as a CPB
- We will nominate a Skills Champion for Care leavers

Priority 1

Education, Employment & Training

Outcome Lead: Matthew Cooke/Wendy Wright
Councillor Lead: To be agreed

Priority actions:	Targets and timescales	Owner
We will extend the role of the Virtual School to ensure there is a post 16 and post 18 education and training offer to all care leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Develop tailored offer with University of Suffolk and other local providers by September 2021</i> – <i>Ensure access to ESOL post 19 for UASC</i> 	<i>Matthew Cooke</i>
We will deliver the Work Well Suffolk (employment support and coaching) to care leavers over 18 who are economically inactive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Employment of 3 navigators for those referred by August 2020</i> – <i>Targets – 800 vulnerable young people accessing service</i> 	<i>Andrew Mawby</i>
We will develop workshops for care leavers wishing to apply for roles within SCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Develop application and interview guidance for care leavers 2020-2021</i> 	<i>Megan O’Keefe</i>
Partner agencies will offer at least two apprenticeship opportunities to care leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>3 care leavers apprenticeships with IBC, 2 with West Suffolk and 2 with East Suffolk council by 2022</i> 	<i>Chris Wright</i>
Following the successful launch of a pilot 2 year care leaver apprenticeship programme in 2019 we will seek the funding to continue the programme with a second cohort in 2021 and explore the possibility of increasing the number of places from 3 to 5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Funding being applied for in in Sep 2020</i> – <i>If ongoing funding is successfully obtained the next intake on the programme will be Sep 2021</i> – <i>Targets – to fill all funded places available</i> 	<i>Megan O’Keefe</i>
We will develop and implement a multi-agency pathway to Education and Training (P2E) Panel to track and support 16 and 17year olds into education, employment and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Increase percentage of care leavers in EET</i> – <i>Target commence Panel September 2020</i> 	<i>Chris Wright/Michael Gray</i>

Priority 2		Experience stability, feel safe and secure	
Outcome Lead: Tina Hines			
Councillor Lead: To be agreed			
Priority actions:	Targets and timescales	Owner	
We will work with partners to avoid placements of care leavers in B&B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>95% of care leavers in suitable provision</i> – <i>End use of B&B by Suffolk system 2022</i> 	<i>YPHAG</i>	
We will prevent homelessness of care leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>No care leavers will become homeless</i> – <i>Have in place Pre eviction panels by December 2020</i> – <i>Development of “second chance” scheme in 2021</i> – <i>Expansion of Staying Close to include move on from supported accommodation, commencing July 2020</i> 	<i>YPHAG / Staying Close Board</i>	
We will prioritise the needs of care leavers for affordable, suitable and sustainable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Revised Care Leaver offer agreed and in place April 2021</i> – <i>Suffolk System Housing Pledge in place 2021</i> 	<i>Suffolk Housing Board</i>	
We will work with partners to quality assure semi-independent accommodation for care leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Minimum standards for unregulated accommodation for care leavers adopted. June 2021</i> 	<i>YPHAG</i>	
We will broaden our offer of accommodation to care leavers through investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Finalise business case for purchase October 2020</i> – <i>Agree a systems position via Strategic Housing Board January 2021</i> 	<i>Rob Hancock, Corporate Property</i>	

Priority 3		Improved access to health
Outcome Lead: Garry Joyce		
Councillor Lead: To be agreed		
Priority actions:	Targets and timescales	Owner
Each child in care and care leaver to be entitled to free access to a range of sports and leisure opportunities	– Available across Suffolk by June 2021	Chris Wright
Redesign mental health services to ensure that care leavers have appropriate access to emotional wellbeing services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Robust local provision in place for care leavers and UASC to receive specialist and dedicated mental health services within locally agreed timescales – As part of above, ensuring care leavers are recognised in the new crisis outreach service – Crisis outreach service staffed by Dec 2020 – Launch of the service April 2021 – Robust local provision in place for mental health case management and treatment to continue for care leavers moving from child to adult mental health services until a complete handover is completed – Develop processes to collect and monitor diversity trends for care leavers and UASC to assess the impact on meeting needs on delivery and transition. – Monitor the number of care leavers transitioning to adult mental health services, whose case management and treatment continues in children's mental health services until a complete handover. 	<p>Garry Joyce / Jo John / Beulah Chizimba</p> <p>Anita Farrant</p> <p>Garry Joyce / Jo John / Beulah Chizimba</p> <p>Garry Joyce / Jo John / Beulah Chizimba</p> <p>Garry Joyce / Jo John / Beulah Chizimba</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Develop processes to collect experience feedback from care leavers on access to appropriate mental health services.</i> – <i>Improve processes to collect feedback from recognised assessment tools to measure how well we are meeting care leaver's needs through access to specialist and dedicated mental health services when needed.</i> – <i>Timescales to be set for 2021 as redesign progresses.</i> 	<p><i>Garry Joyce / Jo John / Beulah Chizimba</i></p> <p><i>Garry Joyce / Jo John / Beulah Chizimba</i></p>
<p>We will improve the training and process for SDQs to ensure that we have an accurate insight into a young person's wellbeing and that their wellbeing needs are met.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Implement SDQ improvement action plan</i> 	<p><i>Matthew Cooke</i> <i>Austine Adigwe</i></p>

Priority 4

Financial stability and independence

Outcome Lead: Cliff James

Councillor Lead: To be agreed

Priority actions:

Targets and timescales

Owner

We will explore how the Suffolk system can offer free or discounted travel on public transport for care leavers

- *Discussion with Growth, Highways and Infrastructure re scoping and feasibility by January 2021*
- *Paper to Corporate Parenting Board for discussion by Summer 2021*

Cliff James

We will provide financial advice and independence training for all care leavers

- *Develop links with Stone Foundation to provide tenancy training for care leavers January 2021*

Wendy Wright

We will use our SCC colleagues to support financial independence and avoid money lenders/pay day loans

- *Put in place a SCC support system and framework utilising our parental expertise January 2021*

Wendy Wright

Continue to develop our local offer to support young people's independence in accordance with their wishes.

- *To review annually. Next review due 2021*
- *100% pathway plans in place*
- *Review of Setting Up Home Allowance November 2020*

Wendy Wright

We will explore broadening Council Tax exemption for Care leavers that do not reside in the local area; this will be in line with offers from comparable local authorities

- *Develop business case June 2021*
- *Develop process for when the care plan agrees a care leaver resides in another authority*
- *Agreement with SCOLT and Public Sector Leaders*

Wendy Wright

Priority 5	Experience strong family networks and be the best you can be	
Outcome Lead: Cliff James Councillor Lead: To be agreed		
Priority actions:	Targets and timescales	Owner
We will ensure care leavers have a network of people that care and support about them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Signs of Safety 'Mapping' process piloted successfully in West Suffolk to be rolled out across county by November 2020</i> – <i>Every young person entering Leaving Care Service has completed mapping within 3 months</i> 	<i>Wendy Wright</i>
We will ensure care leavers have the opportunity to experience activities and celebration events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>We will ensure all care leavers have the opportunity to attend a residential break by December 2021</i> 	<i>Chris Wright</i>
We will ensure care leavers have support from mentors and peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>30 young people being supported by a Mentor</i> 	<i>Wendy Wright</i> <i>Chris Wright</i>
We will work with partners to enable discounted entrance to entertainment venues in Suffolk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Arrangements in place with at least one venue in Ipswich, Bury and Lowestoft</i> 	<i>Wendy Wright</i> <i>Chris Wright</i>
We will develop a range of interventions and support to ensure care leavers are given every opportunity to parent well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Agree Positive Choices service offer for care leavers Sept 2020</i> – <i>Young Parent Pathway pilot expanded beyond Lowestoft to whole of Suffolk in 2021</i> 	<i>Wendy Wright</i> <i>Nicole Hobson</i>

Priority 6

Be the best corporate parent

Outcome Lead: Walter McCulloch

Councillor Lead: Cllr Stephen Burroughs

Priority actions:	Targets and timescales	Owner
We will review our Corporate Parenting Board and make key recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– <i>Key recommendations from review agreed by Board Sept 2020</i>– <i>LCS Strategy agreed Sept 2020</i>– <i>Annual Review CPB Sept 2021</i>	<i>Walter McCulloch</i>
We will invite representation from the Our Voice Group to the Corporate Parenting Board on a bi-annual basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– <i>Agree at Sept 2020 Board, for implementation December 2020</i>	<i>Cliff James</i>
Leaving Care Strategy Group to be established, with clear set of priorities linked to this Strategy and the action plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– <i>LCS Group in place November 2020</i>	<i>Walter McCulloch</i>
We will develop appropriate Champion roles for members of the Corporate Parenting Board and SCC Corporate Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– <i>Agreed at CPB September 2020</i>– <i>Member roles to be agreed October 2020</i>	<i>Cllr Burroughs</i> <i>Allan Cadzow</i>
We will appoint a Skills Champion for Care Leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– <i>October 2020</i>	<i>Cllr Burroughs</i>
We will develop the Leaving Care Covenant with the LEP and the Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– <i>January 2021</i>	<i>Skills Champion</i> <i>Cliff James</i>