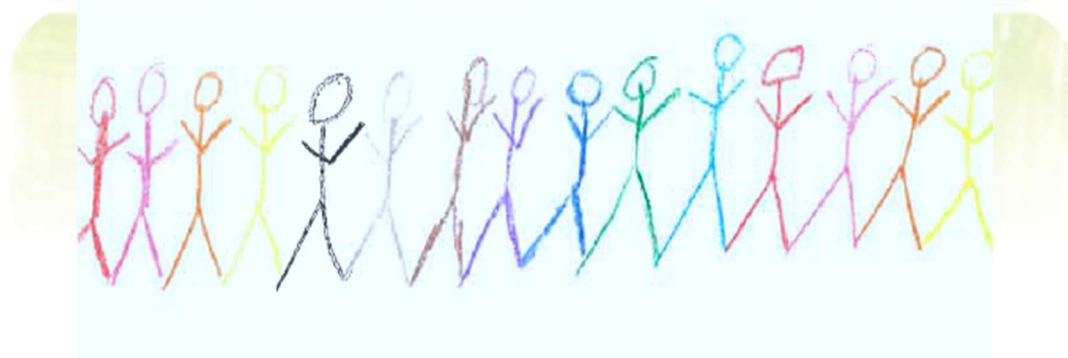


West Lothian Corporate Parenting Plan 2023 - 2026



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Foreword

In West Lothian, the Corporate Parenting Plan is developed by the multi-agency Corporate Parenting Strategic Group. As Corporate Parents, we are committed to keeping the Promise and getting it right for every looked after child, young person and care leaver in West Lothian.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 puts Corporate Parenting on a statutory footing and is defined as **“the formal and local partnerships between all services responsible for working together to meet the needs of looked after children, young people and care leavers”**. Partners in West Lothian work collaboratively on actions to deliver on agreed corporate parenting priorities.

As Corporate Parents, we hold the highest level of commitment and ambition for care experienced children and young people. It is a priority that children and young people have the best possible start in life.

Corporate parenting is not new and is embraced in West Lothian. We are trying hard to prevent children from becoming care experienced but when this is required, we will be the best corporate parents we can be. As corporate parents we strive, like any good parent for care experienced children and young people to be healthy, happy and secure and be included in communities growing up, whilst understanding the impact of disadvantage and vulnerabilities and the supports required to respond and meet needs. There is an established commitment to provide the leadership required to help ensure all care experienced children have the opportunities to grow into confident, resilient and successful individuals, and we will ensure that we stand with them on their journey into more independent futures.

There has been positive progress which we will continue to build on to realise our ambitions for care experienced children and young people. West Lothian support the Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework outcome for children and young people, with the ethos that *‘we grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential’*. The Framework sets out a vision for Scotland where children’s human rights are embedded in all aspects of society, where childhood is free from poverty, hunger, and abuse and where children’s life chances are enhanced by supporting families when they need it. We aim to deliver services that are trauma informed and child centred, that provide holistic family support.

We recognise that there has been consideration both locally and nationally as to how we describe our children and young people, and their families to recognise their experience. Within this Plan some terms will be used interchangeably. Due to the current legislative framework in which we have duties and responsibilities, the terms ‘looked after children’ and ‘care leavers’ are used as there are rights and entitlements attached to these terms. We do understand that many young people do not wish to be referred to as children, and also that the acronyms of ‘LAC or LAAC’ or being ‘looked after’ is not descriptive terms they would wish to recognise instead opting for ‘care experience’.

Participation, engagement and consultation will take place through the life of this plan to ensure we hear and listen to the views of children, young people, families and staff about the approach that we are taking and the priorities we have identified.

As a partnership of corporate parents, we look forward to working together to ensure that we improve the lives of West Lothian’s care experienced children and young people.

Susan Mitchell
Chair, Corporate Parenting Strategic Group

West Lothian Corporate Parenting Plan 2023-2026:

- This plan is a continuation of the previous plan 2020-2023 and was developed through engagement with partners, staff and our children, young people and their families
- Defines the approaches and mechanisms, as part of the Children’s Services Plan, which partners use in West Lothian to plan and deliver to achieve defined outcomes for children, young people and families.
- Defines the key priorities agreed by partners and multi- agency actions
- Explains how progress towards outcomes will be monitored and measured through performance indicators and will be driven by challenging targets

The West Lothian corporate parenting vision is underpinned by the national programmes of the Curriculum for Excellence, Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Promise.

Desired outcomes are that that all children become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens through being safe, nurtured, healthy, active, included, achieving, respected and responsible.

VISION	
Every child should have the best start in life to enable them to: have high aspirations, build the foundations for living well in the future, and realise their potential	
PRINCIPLES that we will ensure the priorities adhere to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-distributing resources towards targeted activities with individuals, groups and communities • Improving outcomes for the individual child and their family • Improved Integrated working • Focusing on early intervention by shifting resources from managing crisis to prevention and building resilience 	
PRIORITIES (WORKSTREAMS)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve our care and care planning • Improve the health and wellbeing of looked after children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise attainment and promoting positive destinations • Provide effective through care and aftercare support and services
THEMES running through all the priorities	
Early Intervention and Prevention Approaches GIRFEC / UNCRC / the Promise	

Corporate Parenting Duties

Who do Corporate Parents support?

Partners in West Lothian work together to meet the needs of care experienced children and young people. This includes:

- In residential care, including secure care
- In foster care
- In kinship care, who live with a family member other than a parent
- Looked after at home
- Disabled and who receive overnight respite
- Left care – up to the age of 26 years



Duties of Corporate Parents:

The duties and responsibilities of corporate parents are outlined in **Part 9, Section 58** of the **Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014**. Corporate parents need to make sure the rights of the children and young people in their care are respected. They should do this by:

- Being **ALERT** to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of care experienced children and young people.
- **ASSESS** the needs of those children and young people for services and support.
- **PROMOTE** the interests of those children and young people.
- Seek to provide care experienced children and young people with **OPPORTUNITIES** to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing.
- Take action to help care experienced children and young people **ACCESS** opportunities and make use of the services and access support they provide.
- Take any other action you consider appropriate for the purpose of **IMPROVING** the way in which you exercise your functions in relation to care experienced children and young people.

Working together involves:

- Sharing relevant information with each other
- Making sure their services are properly coordinated
- Funding sports, cultural and leisure activities on behalf of children and young people
- Publishing plans about how to get better at helping the children and young people

Corporate Parenting – Local Profile

Local Population:

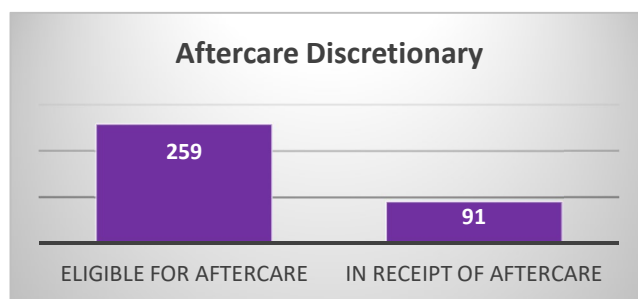
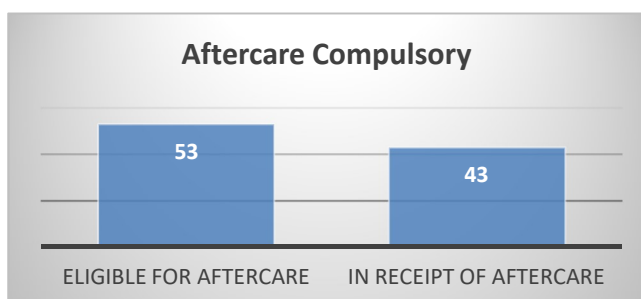
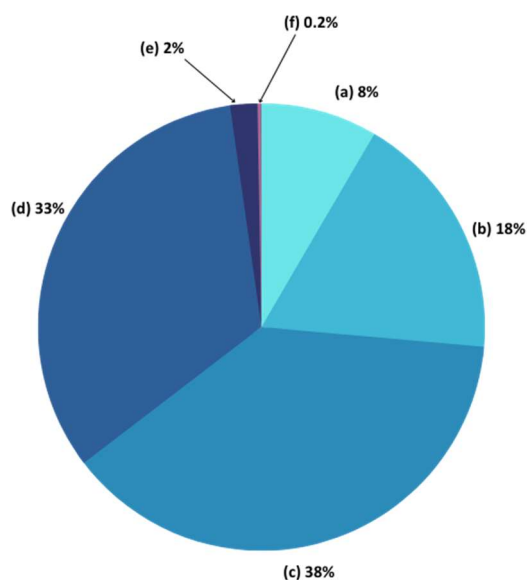
In planning for the development and delivery of services for children, young people and their families, the profile of West Lothian’s children and families has been considered.

In 2021 West Lothian had a population of approximately 185, 580 and it is estimated that the population of children and young people aged 0-15 years was 35, 133 which is 19% of this total population. The projection is for the population to increase to 192, 812 by 2028.

Corporate Parenting:

At 31 March 2023, West Lothian were supporting 356 Looked After Children, this was a reduction from the previous year of 376. The breakdown of setting was as follows:

Setting	Number of children
a) Residential	30
b) At home with parents	64
c) Foster care	136
d) Kinship care	118
e) Relatives	7
f) Prospective adopters	1



At 31 March 2023, 134 young people in West Lothian were receiving aftercare support, 91 with keyworkers and 43 in contact without a keyworker.

National and local Context

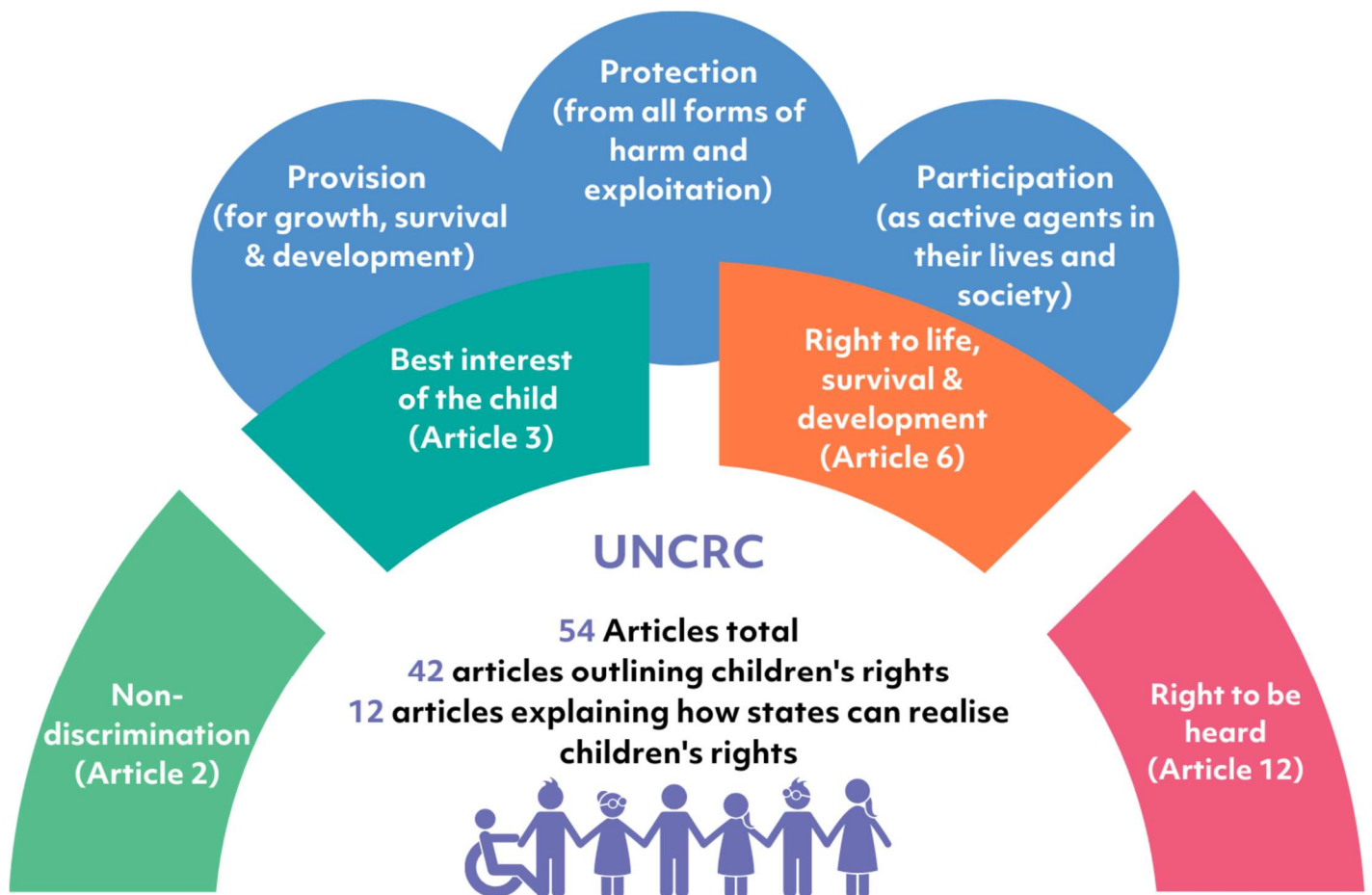
A wide range of legislation, regulation and guidance provides the framework for our work with care experienced children and their families, in particular Part 9, Section 58 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Getting it Right for Looked After Children and Young People and Guidance on Health Assessments for Looked After Children in Scotland. Work has continued in West Lothian over the years to improve the life experience of care experienced children, and we will continue to improve our role as corporate parents alongside National Government benchmarking indicators.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill sets out the specific rights that all children have to help fulfil their potential, including rights relating to health and education, leisure and play, fair and equal treatment, protection from exploitation and the right to be heard.

The Scottish Government is committed to the incorporation of the UNCRC into scots law to the maximum extent possible.

In West Lothian, a main priority is Promoting Children's Rights and this includes imbedding all of the articles of the UNCRC into all service delivery to ensure children are aware of and understand their rights and know what to do if they feel their rights are not being met.

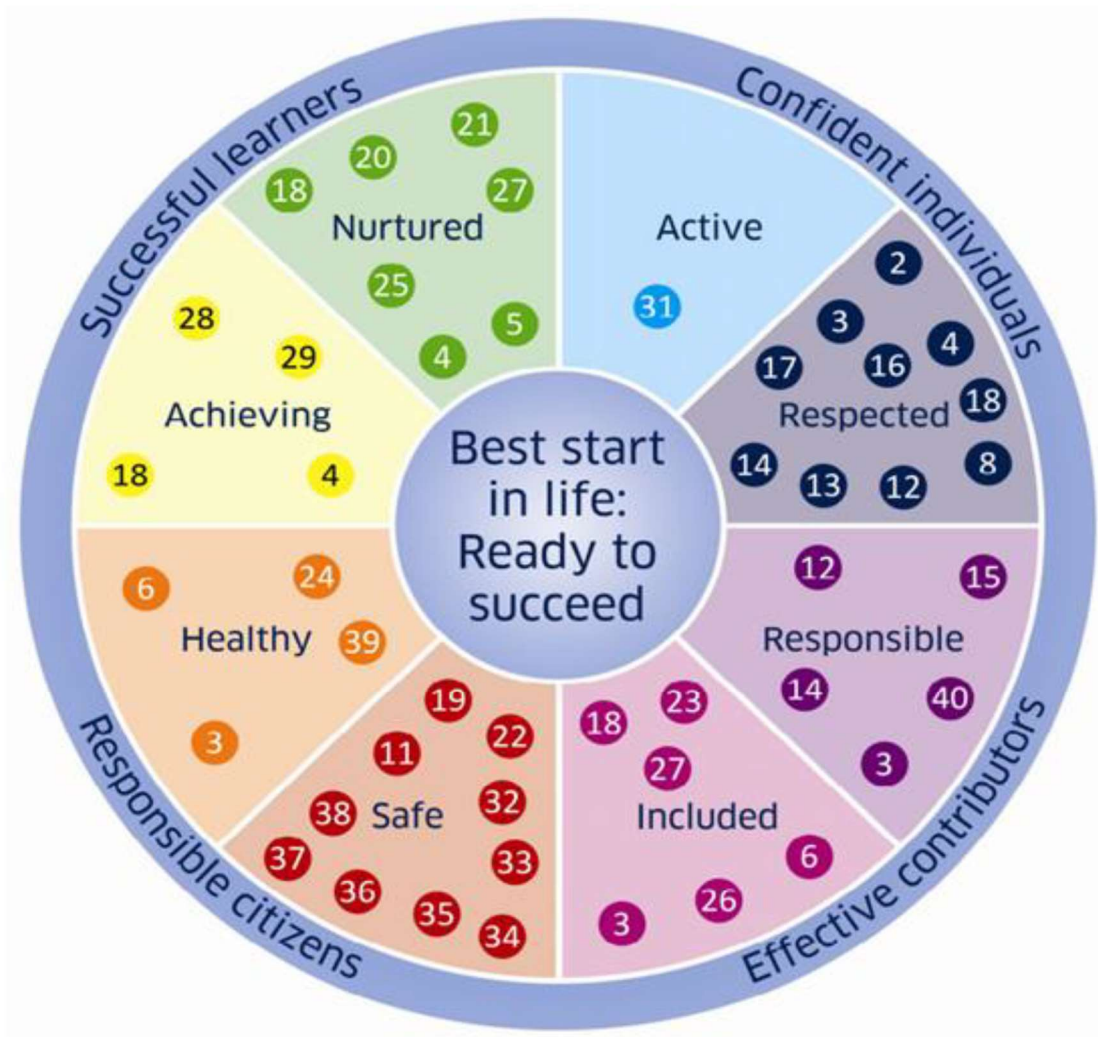


Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)

GIRFEC provides Scotland with a consistent framework and shared language for promoting, supporting, and safeguarding the wellbeing of children and young people. It is locally embedded and positively embraced by organisations, services and practitioners across Children’s Services Planning Partnerships, with a focus on changing culture, systems and practice.

In response to messages from Learning Review processes in West Lothian, a multiagency GIRFEC working group was established in 2022 to refresh and develop revised guidance for Child’s Planning Meetings, to assist practitioners in understanding the role and function of planning meetings and to ensure timely and effective use of meetings. The guidance defines the named person and lead professional and outlines timescales. The voice of the child is highlighted and prioritised within the preparation, delivery and recording of Child Planning Meetings in line with The Promise.

The 42 articles of the UNCRC outlining children’s rights align directly to the GIRFEC wellbeing indicators SHANARRI:



The SHANARRI wellbeing indicators and UNCRC articles are explained on page 15

The Promise

Scotland launched Plan 21-24, on 31st March 2021 which sets out the Five Priority Areas and Five Fundamentals which will be essential to achieving the transformation change required to improve outcomes for care experienced children and young people. Strong connections have been developed nationally with The Promise Scotland to support the progress of the West Lothian's Call to Action Plan which will ensure each partner understands the actions required to realise the change programme.

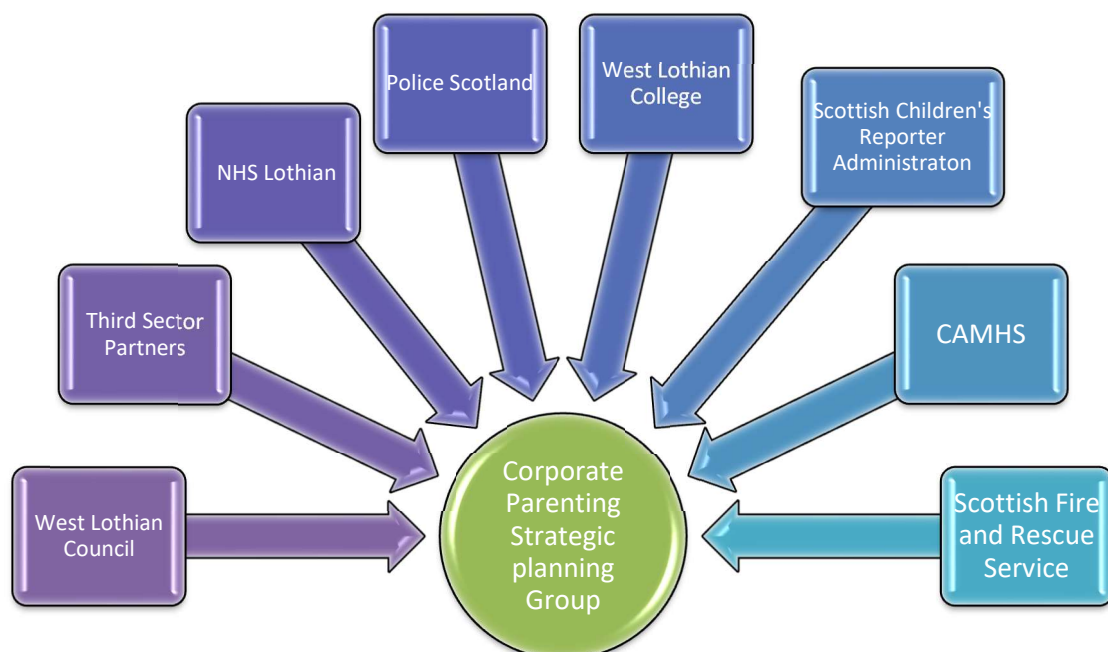
In West Lothian, significant work has been undertaken to support language, practice and cultural changes and work continues to lead on the changes required by all partners to ensure young people grow up loved, safe and respected. A number of new developments have been established which strengthen community based, whole family services which work in partnership across West Lothian, providing a variety of services to support families at the right time for them.



Working Together

The lead responsibility for the Corporate Parenting Plan and wider children's services rests with the Children and Families Strategic Planning Group (C&FSPG) which reports directly to the Community Planning Partnership on performance and progress.

Membership of the Corporate Parenting Strategic Planning Group includes senior officers from:



Our Priorities

There are four priority areas that partners will work together on as outlined below and these form the basis of West Lothian's Corporate Parenting Plan. Workstreams are established for each priority and progress on each priority is overseen by the Corporate Parenting Strategic Group. Each of the work streams has a detailed action plan in place which sets out specific actions and activities to drive forward identified areas of improvements. The measures will be analysed and findings used for further quality improvements to be made.

Four high level priorities:

- ✚ Improving the Quality of Care and Care Planning
- ✚ Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Looked After Children
- ✚ Raising Attainment and Positive Destinations
- ✚ Providing Effective Through Care and Aftercare Support and Services



Improving the Quality of our Care and Care Planning

Improving the quality of our care and care planning for children and young people ensures we can deliver a timely, effective and child centred provision of service. We recognise however that for some children and young people specialist help will be required to address more complex needs and partnership working is a key element of this priority and plan as a whole.

How we will achieve this:

- Reduce the time taken to decide on children returning home or having an alternative permanent placement plan in place
- Reduce the number of placement moves experienced by children and young people
- Improve quality of Child's Plans and planning process
- Ensure the child or young person contributes to their care planning

To support this priority, activities will include:

- Commitment to PACE (Permanence and Care Excellence) programme to achieve early permanence decisions and ensure best outcomes for children looked after away from home
- All children and young people to be referred to Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) by their 6-week My Planning Meeting
- Strengthen sibling assessments and seek to keep siblings together
- Align timescales for progressing Permanence Orders and Residence Orders with the Adoption route
- Introduce Safer Caring Policy for individual children and young people
- Consistent approach to four-weekly care planning meetings, emergency planning meetings, and unplanned ending meetings
- Accessible format to capture children's views for My Planning Meetings
- Consistent Child's Plan format to promote continuity through a child's journey

How we will measure this:

- Percentage of children and young people with a permanence recommendation at their 9 month My Planning Meeting
- Percentage of children who have experienced a placement move
- Percentage of children and young people who have experience multiple placement moves
- Percentage of children and young people attending/contributing views to Children's Hearings
- Percentage of children/young people attending/contributing views to My Planning Meetings

Improving Health and Wellbeing

Improving health and wellbeing is at the core of what we do and is where we focus the majority of our preventative work intervening and providing support, early enough to prevent deterioration or escalation. We recognise however that for some children and young people specialist help will be required to address more complex needs that impact health and wellbeing. Across the partnership support, there is a range of services in place to support care experienced children and young people and ensure that they get the right support at the right time.

How we will achieve this:

- Improving timely access to assessment and effective health interventions for care experienced children and young people
- Increasing the numbers of looked after children and young people given opportunities to pursue sports, cultural and leisure activities

To support this priority, activities will include:

- Developing a single point of access for Mental Health & Family Support and explore 3rd sector support tailored to the needs of care experienced children and young people
- Enable timely access to care through prioritisation of care experienced children and young people in our pathways
- Ensuring that staff and care experienced children and young people are aware of what supports or services they are entitled to
- Ensure care experienced children and young people are offered initial and annual review health assessments, and improve consent rates of these assessments

How we will measure this:

- Percentage of care experienced children and young people consenting to initial and annual health assessments
- Percentage of looked after children referred to the single point of access, and have their needs supported
- Establish outcomes framework and commence analysis of data collected at health assessments (NHS)
- Identify training needs of workforce to ensure all relevant staff can be trained over coming year to have appropriate knowledge of corporate parenting duties (NHS)

Raising Attainment and Promoting Positive Destinations

West Lothian is committed to improving attainment for all children and young people in line with the National Improvement Framework and through the effective delivery of Curriculum for Excellence. Schools in West Lothian have consistently demonstrated their capacity to improve attainment. Within the strategy, the overarching themes are to raise the attainment of all in achieving excellence, and to ensure equity through closing the gap in education outcomes between children from the most and least deprived backgrounds.

How we will achieve this:

- Improving attainment levels for looked after children and young people and ensuring that their learning needs are identified and addressed
- Increasing the number of children residentially looked after who are engaging meaningfully with their educations and who are routinely attending school
- Increasing training and employment opportunities for looked after young people and care-experienced young people
- Increasing the numbers of looked after young people who are sustaining a positive destination after leaving school

To support this priority, activities will include:

- Level Up Project (CECYP targeted): This project employs an intensive, multi-agency approach to re-engage our care experienced learners with minimal engagement in their education and who are at risk of care placement break down
- Level Up Plus (CECYP mainstream): To support care experienced learners to fully access and engage in their learning, identify practical supports and useful strategies to keep care experienced engaged in their education
- Enhance the development of bespoke packages of education to meet individual needs

How we will measure this:

- Percentage of Looked After Children Achieving Level 5 Literacy and Numeracy
- Percentage of Looked After Children Achieving one SCQF level 6 award
- Percentage Attendance at school of looked After children and young people
- Positive Destination Data
- Percentage of school leavers (Looked After Children) entering a positive destination

Providing Effective Through Care and Aftercare Support and Services

The Throughcare and Aftercare Service support young people transitioning from being looked after and moving towards independence. The service works with partners to support young people in further education and employment, budgeting and financial matters, as well as many aspects of health and wellbeing. Partners aim to support young people to overcome challenges and have positive destinations.

How we will achieve this:

- Reducing the number of care-experienced young people who experience homelessness
- Improve transition planning for care experienced young people
- Providing effective support and guidance for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

To support this priority, activities will include:

- Increase the number of looked after children remaining in their existing placements beyond the age of 16 and 18 years
- Increase the number of supported Adult Placements
- Implement transition policy for care experienced young people moving from children's services to adult services
- Developing awareness and access to information on aftercare services in West Lothian
- Establishing a multi-agency working group to develop best practice for supporting asylum seeking young people

How we will measure this:

- Number of care experienced young people who experience homelessness
- Number of looked after children remaining in their existing care placements beyond the age of 16 and 18
- Percentage of eligible care experienced young people allocated in adult social work services 6 months prior to their 18th birthday
- Number of eligible asylum seeking young people accessing aftercare services
- Number of eligible care leavers accessing support services

Conclusion

As corporate parents, we are ambitious and aspirational for our care experienced children and young people and are determined to support them to maximise their potential.

This Corporate Parenting Plan sets out our priorities and commitments to improve outcomes.

Workstreams, led by senior responsible officers will progress the four priorities and will drive forward the implementation of the plan. Progress reports and performance information will be submitted to the Corporate Parenting Strategic Group on a quarterly basis. An annual report reflecting the progress we have made in improving outcomes for our looked after children and young people will be produced.

The Plan will be kept under review to ensure that it takes account of the changing needs of our care experienced population and partners will ensure they have access to a range of support services which meets their needs.

We recognise that the delivery and implementation of the changes identified in the Plan will be challenging. We will work together as Corporate Parents to make these changes happen to ensure that we get it right for looked after children and young people, to give them the best start in life and support them to achieve their aspirations.



SHANARRI Indicators and UNCRC articles

Description of the SHANARRI Indicators and UNCRC Articles

Wellbeing Indicator	Suggested Links to the UNCRC
<p>Safe</p> <p>Protected from abuse, neglect or harm at home, at school and in the community</p>	<p>(11) abduction and non-return of children, (19) protection from violence, abuse and neglect, (22) refugee children, (32) child labour, (33) drug abuse, (34) sexual exploitation, (35) abduction, sale and trafficking, (36) other forms of exploitation, (37) inhumane treatment and detention, (38) war and armed conflicts</p>
<p>Healthy</p> <p>Having the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, access to suitable healthcare and support in learning to make healthy, safe choices</p>	<p>(3) best interests of the child, (6) life, survival and development, (24) health and health services, (39) recovery and rehabilitation of child victims</p>
<p>Achieving</p> <p>Being supported and guided in learning and in the development of skills, confidence and self-esteem, at home, in school and in the community</p>	<p>(4) Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights in systems that promote and protect these rights, (18) parental responsibilities and state assistance, (28) right to education, (29) goals of education</p>
<p>Nurtured</p> <p>Having a nurturing place to live in a family setting, with additional help if needed, or, where possible, in a suitable care setting</p>	<p>(4) Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights in systems that promote and protect these rights, (5) parental guidance and a child's evolving capacities, (18) parental responsibilities and state assistance, (20) children deprived of a family, (21) adoption, (25) review of treatment in care, (27) adequate standard of living</p>
<p>Active</p> <p>Having opportunities to take part in activities such as play, recreation and sport, which contribute to healthy growth and development, at home, in school and in the community</p>	<p>(3) best interests of the child, (23) children with disabilities, (31) leisure, play and culture</p>
<p>Respected</p> <p>Having the opportunity, along with carers, to be heard and involved in decisions that affect them</p>	<p>(2) non-discrimination, (3) best interests of the child, (4) Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights in systems that promote and protect those rights. parental guidance and a child's evolving capacities, (8) protection and preservation of identity, (12) respect for the views of the child, (13) freedom of expression, (14) freedom of thought, belief and religion, (16) right to privacy, (17) access to information; mass media, (18) parental responsibilities and state assistance, (30) the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family</p>
<p>Responsible</p> <p>Having opportunities and encouragement to play active and responsible roles at home, in school and in the community, and where necessary, having appropriate guidance and supervision, and being involved in decisions that affect them</p>	<p>(3) best interests of the child, (12) respect for the views of the child, (14) freedom of thought, conscience and religion, (15) freedom of association, (40) juvenile justice</p>
<p>Included</p> <p>Having help to overcome social, educational, physical and economic inequalities, and being accepted as part of the community in which they live and learn</p>	<p>(3) best interests of the child, (6) life, survival and development, (18) parental responsibilities and state assistance, (23) children with disabilities, (26) social security, (27) adequate standard of living</p>