

A decorative background on the left side of the page features a stylized rainbow with bands of red, orange, yellow, and dark teal. Above and below the rainbow are stylized clouds in white and light grey. The entire background is set against a solid light blue color.

CORPORATE PARENTING  
STRATEGY 2022-24

# BEING THE BEST CORPORATE PARENTS WE CAN BE

Our commitment to see children and  
young people with care-experience  
flourish and thrive in Devon

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# An open letter from children and young people with care experience

Dear Corporate Parents,

We are children and young people who have experience of Devon's care.

As our corporate parents, we want you to think about how you treat us. We want to be respected for who we are as individuals. This means treating us fairly and showing us that you care.

Communication is really important to us. Ask us what language we prefer, treat us how you would expect to be treated and don't be patronising. Be honest with us, listen to us, and be open-minded about how best to get to know us.

We want you to listen to our views. This might be about asking how we are and how we are feeling. Make sure you understand what we are really saying and feeling by checking back in with us. It is really important that you show how you respect us and our experience in real ways. Remember, we are all our own unique individuals, who are children and young people first and foremost. We are not defined by our care experience.

Finally, we expect our corporate parents to do what you say you will do, stick to your promises and not make excuses. We want to have good relationships with the people who work with us, where you are flexible, willing and open-minded to always try and do what is best for us.

**Stand Up Speak Up**

Devon's Children in Care Council



# An open letter to children and young people with care experience

Dear children and young people with care experience,

We are your corporate parents, with a responsibility to keep you safe and well, and support you to get the very best out of life.

We are all passionate about making Devon a place where all children and young people have the best possible start in life and are able to access all the things that are needed to learn, grow and have fun. We want young people to go on to become well-rounded, resilient and independent young adults who are engaged and thriving members of their local communities. The whole of Devon is made stronger as a result.

As corporate parents, we want this to be true for you, as children and young people with experience of care. This means doing our very best for you to help you flourish and thrive. We want you to feel safe, loved and cared for in our County. We want you to feel accepted for who you are, as unique individuals. We want you to be listened to, heard and understood in all that we do. We agree with you that having strong relationships with us, which are built on trust and respect, is fundamental to this.

As senior leaders in Devon County Council, alongside all our hard-working and dedicated staff and carers, we are committed to being the best possible corporate parents we can be. This is our plan of how we aim to do this together.

**Phil Norrey**

Chief Executive, Devon  
County Council



**Melissa Caslake**

Chief Officer for Children's  
Services, Devon County Council



**Lisa Bursill**

Head of Service - Children's Social  
Care, Devon County Council



**Councillor John Hart**

Elected Leader of  
Devon County Council



**Councillor Andrew Leadbetter**

Elected Cabinet Member for  
Children's Services



## What is corporate parenting?

Corporate Parenting is our responsibility to be loving, caring and aspirational for all children and young people who are in our care, or who have recently left our care as adults.

Above all else, this means protecting children and young people from harm and keeping them safe. But, importantly, it is about always striving for their best interests, nurturing their ambitions and helping our children and young people get the most out of life. Ultimately, it means they become independent and thriving young adults.

At its heart, Corporate Parenting means always asking ourselves **“would this be good enough for my child?”**

## Our vision for all children and young people

**We believe that every child and young person in Devon should have the best possible start in life and the opportunity to thrive. We want to ensure children and young people receive the right support, at the right time, and in the right place.**

For children and young people with care experience, our vision is no different.

We recognise that children and young people, who have care-experience, can face additional challenges that others their age may not. As their corporate parents, and in spite of these obstacles, we want them to achieve good outcomes in all aspects of their lives.

For this reason, our ambition to be good corporate parents goes far beyond any laws. Instead, we have a moral, social and economic responsibility, as public services, civil society, local communities and wider society, to work together to equip and empower our care-experienced children and young people to succeed and thrive.

## Our promise to children and young people

This is our promise to children and young people in our care. It has been developed by our young people, and is rooted in their lived experience. While the Promise includes a range specific commitments, these five principles underpin how we, as corporate parents, want to act in all that we do and every interaction we have with children and young people.

### Support you

To be happy, healthy and achieve your goals.

### Inform you

To know what your background is, why you are in care, and understand all you need to know while you're in our care.

### Involve you

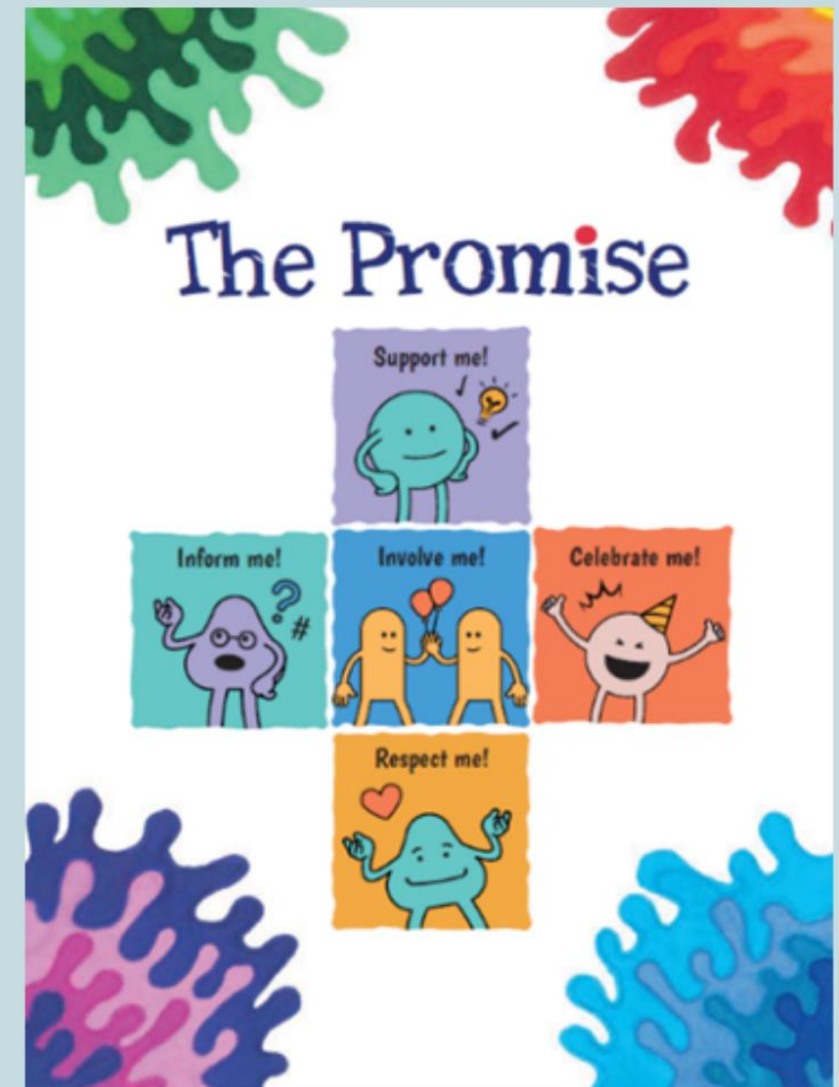
To be included in conversations about you, get your voice heard, and help you be in control of your own lives as much as possible.

### Respect you

To have your own space, be confident in who you are, and be treated fairly.

### Celebrate you

To make happy memories, know your strengths as an individual and understand what you are capable of achieving.



## The Devon approach to corporate parenting

The Devon approach describes what our corporate parenting looks like in practice and how it feels. Children and young people have told us that feeling secure in who they are, their identity, and what they want to achieve in life is so important. As a result, we want our approach to corporate parenting to be about building relationships with each other which always have trust, respect and care at the centre. We will be aspirational for our children and young people and encourage them to be ambitious for themselves too. Our care and support will be there for them both in the good times and the bad. It will be unconditional and fair – regardless of background, experiences or personal choices in life.

As corporate parents in Devon, we will work together, work restoratively and put the views and experiences of children and young people at the heart of what we do.

### Working together

Corporate parenting is a joint effort. Achieving the best possible outcomes for care-experienced children and young people cannot be done alone. That is why our plan for corporate parenting is agreed alongside children and young people, and by all partners of the Devon Children and Families Partnership (DCFP). The Partnership includes Devon County Council, NHS, the Police, schools, the voluntary sector and all of the District Councils across Devon.

Together, as corporate parents, we will work collaboratively and constructively to be the best possible parents we can be. In practice, that means sharing knowledge, resources and expertise between us, wherever possible, to make sure we provide support in the most effective and consistent ways.

## Working restoratively

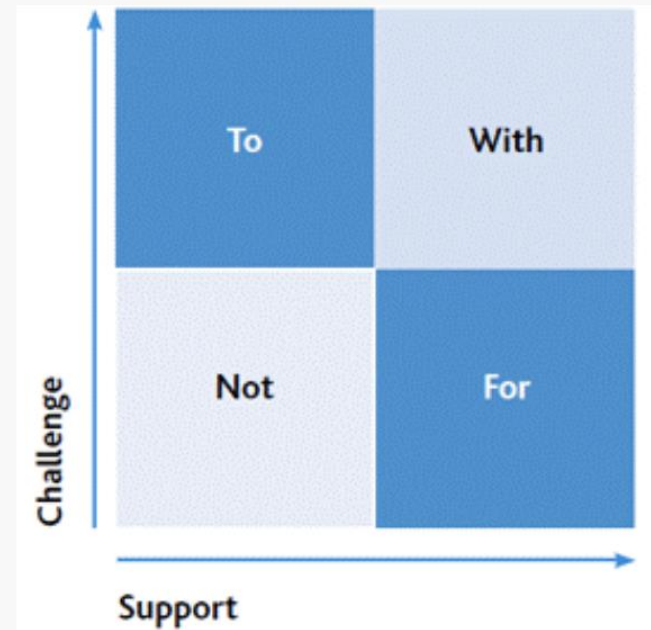
'Restorative Practice' is a term used to describe the behaviours, interactions and approaches which help build positive, healthy relationships, find ways to get through difficulties and repair harm where there has been conflict. Working in restorative ways helps us get to know the children and young people we support better, build on their strengths as individuals and find solutions to problems together. An important part of this is identifying and understanding the impact of trauma so we can support recovery and resilience.

This approach will become **who we are as corporate parents** in Devon, rather than a specific, conscious and time-limited thing that we do.

We will work with children and young people, to empower them to make positive decisions about their lives for themselves. Rather than us, the adults in positions of authority, doing things *to* them or *for* them.

We will expect everyone who works with children and young people, to know what it means to work restoratively and how to put this into practice. We are rolling out restorative practice over time by running training sessions for staff across the Devon Children and Families Partnership and developing our approach through mutual support and challenge in our meetings together.

As a result of this, we hope that children, young people, and their families, will have trust in us, feel that they have better relationships with the people who support them, and , ultimately, that they are able to achieve better outcomes in their lives.



## Hearing the voice of children and young people

All children and young people have the right to be listened to and have their views considered when adults make decisions which affect them. This is one of the United Nations Rights of a Child.

Our ambition in Devon is to create a culture of engagement, which is shared across organisations and services, which put the views and interests of care-experienced children and young people at the heart of all that we do. This ambition is built on the belief that truly hearing the voice of the child means co-designing services with them and is far more than one-off pieces of consultation. We believe that our services will be fairer, more effective, and more sustainable as a result.

Our intentions for developing participation and engagement in Devon are set out in our Children and Young People's Plan and Social Care Engagement Strategy.

## Who helps us hear the voice of children and young people?

Making sure care-experienced children and young people are fully represented, and are able to make their voice heard is everyone's responsibility. However, the following teams are just some of those who work directly with care-experienced children young people and play a key role in delivering on our ambition to be the best corporate parents we can be by putting young people at the heart of all we do.



## The Participation Team

The Participation Team work with children and young people to help them have their voice heard and make sure their lived experiences inform the design and delivery of local services. They run lots of groups, events and activities for young people where they can express themselves, meet others and have fun. Their purpose is to work with children and young people to ultimately effect positive change.

## The health team for children and young people in care in Devon

The Children in Care Health team are a mix of Nurses, Mental Health Practitioners and Doctors. They are a dedicated service for children and young people in care, and carry out all of the regular health assessments.



## Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)

IROs make sure care plans meet the individual needs of children and young people in care and take into account their views, interests and experiences. As the guardian of care plans, IROs often make suggestions about what will make the plan better and can challenge professionals if promises are not being kept. The role of IROs is also to check regularly if plans are clear, updated and being followed-up on. They also praise and celebrate when things go well.

## The Virtual School

Devon's Virtual School aims to make sure all children in care enjoy their education, have access to the highest quality learning environments and achieve the best possible outcomes. Although it is not a real school, with buildings and classrooms, the Virtual School is much like any school in helping every child fulfil their potential and thrive throughout their educational journey. The Virtual School works with lots of different people to make sure we have the highest possible aspirations for children and young people's education and learning.

# National corporate parenting principles

To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people

To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes for children and young people

For children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work

To help children and young people gain access to, and make best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners

To encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings

To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living

To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of children and young people

## Our plan of action

We have a plan for how Devon can be the best possible corporate parents we can be. We want to be clear about what is expected of us, what we want to achieve and how we aim to do that.

Essentially, the strategy is about one thing: making the lives and prospects of all care-experienced children and young people in Devon better. It sounds simple, but it will take time, hard work and involve challenges along the way. But, by working together, holding each other to account, and delivering on our plan, we believe we can turn our words into positive outcomes in the lives of care-experienced children and young people across Devon.

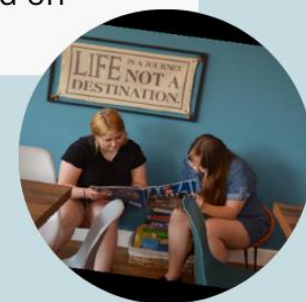
### **The lived experience of care**

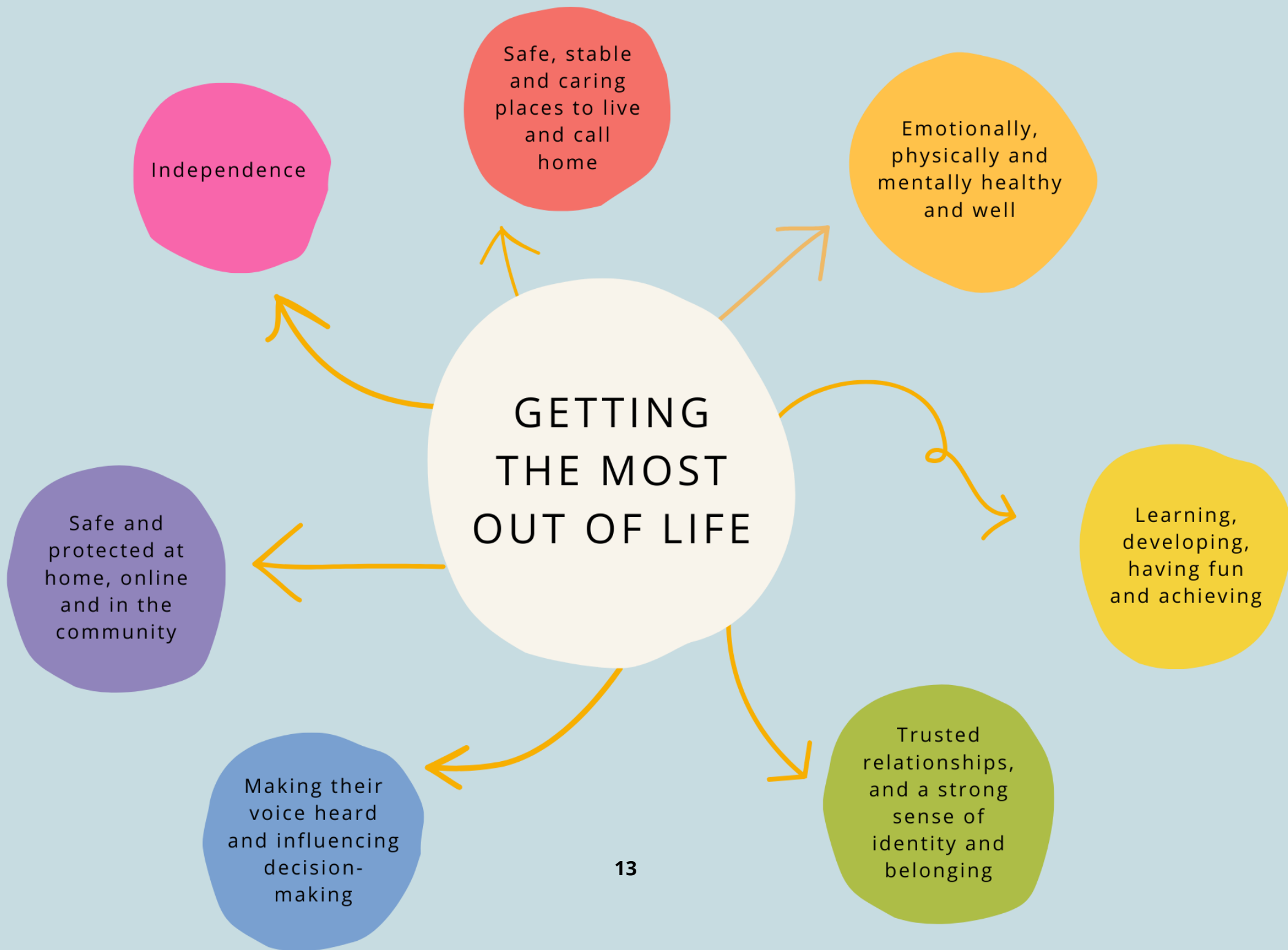
What we say in the strategy comes out of the conversations we've had, both with children and young people who are currently in care, and those who have recently left our care. Not only are they the people who know first-hand what it is like to live in our care, but they are also the people who are most affected by what we say and do. Understanding and acting on their views, interests and lived experiences is fundamental to being a good corporate parent. All children and young people in care are different. We recognise that they all have their own individual strengths, needs and interests.

Over the last year, we have heard from children and young people with care experience in Devon about the different parts of their lives. Under each part of our plan, we summarise what they have told us.

### **Outcomes for children and young people**

We have split the plan into seven outcomes, which cover every aspect of the lives and experiences of children and young people. If we make good progress against each of these, we will know we are doing what we set out to do. While, we want every child or young person with care experience to achieve each of these outcomes, the specific things that we plan to do, to help us achieve each outcome, won't always apply to every child or young person. This will be based on their individual needs and circumstances.





# So, what's the plan?

## Homes and housing

- **Build bridges** to support more children and young people to remain safely with their families and avoid coming into care
- Enable more children in care to **find a place to call home** with families in Devon
- **Promote stability** for children in care by meeting their individual needs in the right place at the right time
- Help young people develop their independence and **step forward** successfully into early adulthood

## Health and wellbeing

- Promote good holistic health, wellbeing and resilience
- Improve our understanding of health and wellbeing needs among professionals, carers, and young people
- Design and deliver services as child-centred, trauma-informed and rooted in the lived experience
- Support smooth transitions within and between services
- Provide timely and effective support for additional health needs

## Learning, developing and having fun

- Be aspirational for children and young people's education and learning
- Provide extra support for babies, children and young people with additional needs
- Support children to remain in school by avoiding exclusions and absences
- Make sure nurseries, schools and colleges are inclusive spaces for care-experienced pupils
- Encourage young people to get involved in extra-curricular activities

## Relationships, identity and belonging

- Help children and young people understand their life story, and maintain strong connections with their birth families
- Support children and young people to build trusted relationships and support networks
- Provide wrap-around support for care-experienced young people who are new parents
- Respect children and young people's identity and support them to be proud of who they are

## Listening, hearing and understanding

- Put the voice of children and young people at the centre of all levels of decision-making
- Provide opportunities so that young people co-produce more services and strategic plans with us
- Let children and young people know the outcomes of decisions, what is possible to do, what is not, and why

## Being safe and protected

- Work together to understand risks, vulnerabilities and needs in the home, in communities and online
- Respond together to harm, abuse and exploitation early, effectively and in child-centred and trauma-informed ways
- Work holistically with young people to avoid criminal behaviour and activity

## Independence

- Prepare early for adulthood and independence
- Offer financial, practical and emotional support for young people who need it in early adulthood
- Support young people to take up further education, employment and training opportunities

## Homes and housing: children and young people have safe, stable and caring places to live and call home

What children and young people say to us..

Having stable and consistent placements means we can call those places home and be able to spread our wings

Finding suitable places to live, where we can stay as a young family after leaving care, means that we can be truly independent and better parents ourselves

Staying Put allows us to keep our relationships with foster carers after we turn 18

The guarantor scheme is good, but is not known about enough

Social housing can be hard to get, and private rental properties are very expensive at the moment

We would like to live as close as possible to friends, family and the things we rely on in our lives

**We will:**

- Work restoratively, and as early as possible, with families and communities so that more children and young people remain safely at home and avoid coming into care in the first place
- Continue to support family members and friends to care for children when it is right and appropriate for them to do so.
- Support more children to be adopted into local family homes, through our regional adoption agency
- Find loving, lasting and stable family homes in Devon for children and young people in care, where they feel safe, able to be themselves, and close to local family and community links.
- Recruit, train and support more carers to provide homes for children and young people with additional needs, older young people and sibling groups so they can be safe, well, and cared for
- Provide high-quality, registered support, care and accommodation for children and young people if they are in a crisis, with the aim of achieving stability and safety in their lives, and a smooth, swift, and lasting return home.
- Plan and prepare early for when young people leave care and help them understand what their housing options are in adulthood
- Work together to find suitable housing options for young people leaving care, especially if they have a young family.
- Support young people to continue living with their foster family beyond the age of 18 if they, and their former foster carers, would like to. We will explore opportunities to extend this beyond the age of 21 too.

**How we will know we are making a difference:**

- Children and young people tell us that they are feeling safer, more stable and more cared for where they are living.
- Young people tell us that, where they are living – the type of place and who they are living with - is helping them be ready to live independently as they get older.
- Fewer children are coming into our care
- More children and young people are living locally in Devon with foster carers.
- Children and young people are moving between homes much less.
- More children and young people are living in suitable houses after they leave our care.
- More young people remain living with their former foster carers after leaving care, if everyone involved wants that.

# Health and wellbeing: children and young people are emotionally, physically and mentally healthy

What children and young people say to us..

We need easier access to mental health services and emotional wellbeing support when we need it

To us, resilience is about being able to bounce forwards after something difficult happens, and maybe also about learning from our mistakes

It needs to be easier to carry on getting the right support after we turn 18

Being healthy, to me, is about being able to function normally and do anything

There should be some more advice, guidance and general support to help us be physically, mentally and emotionally healthy, well and resilient

Mental health and wellbeing support should take into account childhood trauma and what it's like to live in care

Being healthy can be about your physical, emotional and mental health: they are all connected

Mental health support during pregnancy and early parenthood is really important

Going to counselling and having therapy can be quite scary



**We will:**

- Promote good health and wellbeing in all aspects of children and young people's lives
- Support young people to have good self-care and make healthy life choices for themselves and the people around them.
- Offer wellbeing and resilience advice, guidance and support, including online and some face-to-face support. Social workers, PAs and health professionals will help young people access the right service at the right time.
- Equip and empower young people to have the flexibility, wherever possible, to decide the health and wellbeing support they receive.
- Give young people a health passport after their 16th birthday, which outlines their health history and how they can access health care.
- Offer children and young people the opportunity to have an individual health review annually up to the age of 18.
- Make sure that young people turning 18, who no longer require an annual health assessment, are registered with a GP and a dentist, have their eyesight checked regularly, and understand how they can continue to be supported as a young adult
- Support young people, wherever possible, to access dental care, eye care, mental health services, sexual health and drug and alcohol services.
- Advocate for improved access to health services, including dental and eye care, and mental health, that takes into account the lived experience of young people.
- Help young people, and their foster carers and PAs, understand mental health and wellbeing.
- Give children and young people time to get to know the adult working with them, so getting support is less scary.
- Make sure mental health support continues when young people become an adult if they need it, with clear transition plans so that the right referrals can be made at the right time.
- Support children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) early, so they can be healthy, well and achieve good health and education outcomes.
- Make sure education, health care plans (EHCPs) are up to date, aspirational and represent the voice of the child

**We will:**


- If a young person is becoming a parent, we will help them access the support they and their baby need. We want to be the best possible 'corporate grandparents' we can be.
- Join up pregnancy support services, and enhance the targeted health visiting offer, so that young people are supported during pregnancy and early parenthood.
- Make sure, as new parents, young people have opportunities to make their voice heard during pregnancy. This includes opportunities for mutual peer support with other young parents
- Make sure, wherever possible and appropriate, help and support for health and wellbeing is consistent, wherever young people are living, and that it is provided either at home, within the community or at school or college.
- Make sure that, if support is being transferred within and between health services, this will be smooth, and that young people will still get the right level of support at the right time.

**How we will know we are making a difference:**


- Children and young people tell us that they feel more emotionally, physically and mentally healthy and well.
- Children and young people tell us that they don't feel as held back by their emotional or mental health needs and that they know what to do if they are feeling unwell.
- Children and young people tell us that they do not feel judged if they choose to have a baby and become a parent.
- Children and young people tell us that the health care and support they receive is more joined-up, consistent and is more tailored to their needs as an individual.
- Children and young people know who to turn to for support with their health and wellbeing, and that they trust that we will listen and care.
- More children and young people are registered with a GP and a dentist.
- All children and young people are fully up-to-date with all of their immunisations.
- More children and young people have health assessments which are up-to-date and on time.
- Children and young people have better emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- Fewer children and young people require inpatient care.

# **Learning, developing, having fun and achieving: children and young people have inclusive and enriching environments to learn, develop, have fun and achieve**


What children and young people say to us..




**Our mental health is often what stops us from fully engaging with education**



**We like to do fun things with our friends outside of school**



**Having stability in the rest of our lives helps us to keep engaging with our education**



**Some of us don't like going to school because of bullying**



**Some of us need some extra support to access our education and groups and activities in the community**

**We will:**

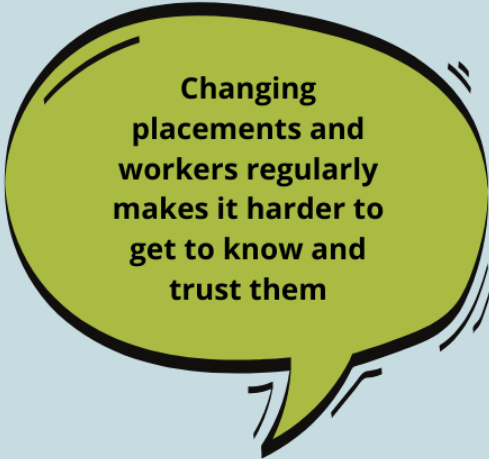
- Be ambitious for children and young people's education and learning. This means keeping an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP), which we will develop with the young person, that has their personal interests and ambitions represented throughout.
- Be aspirational for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and support them to achieve highly through high-quality, up-to-date and ambitious Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and additional support provided by schools.
- Help children and young people feel safe, happy and well at school by working closely with schools. This includes supporting them if they are bullied, as well as working together to prevent bullying in the first place.
- Work with schools to make sure exclusions only happen as a last resort.
- Make sure children and young people have the technology they need to access any online learning.
- Support children and young people with transitions from one school to another to ensure their learning is continuous.
- Help children and young people take part in sport and leisure activities, as well as extra-curricular skills-building awards.
- Support babies and young children to grow and develop well in early life. This includes identifying and supporting any additional needs as early as possible when they first come into our care.

**How we will know we are making a difference:**


- Children and young people tell us that they are enjoying learning and being at school more and feel able to do the best they possibly can.
- Children and young people tell us that they have times where they can have fun and take part in activities that they want to do.
- Children and young people are changing schools less and are less likely to be excluded or be absent from school.
- Children and young people are achieving highly at school.
- Young children and babies, who are in our care, are developing well and are more likely to reach key development goals.
- Outcomes for our children and young people are the same as children who are not in care.

# **Relationships, identity and belonging: children and young people build trusted relationships with the people in their lives, are able to be themselves and are free from stigma**

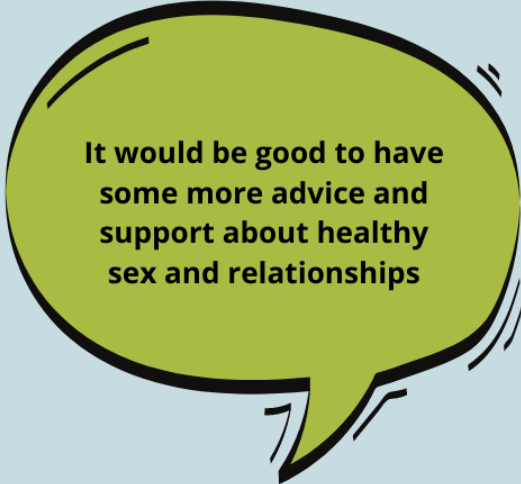
What children and young people say to us..




Changing placements and workers regularly makes it harder to get to know and trust them




Sometimes we can feel singled out as someone who is in care



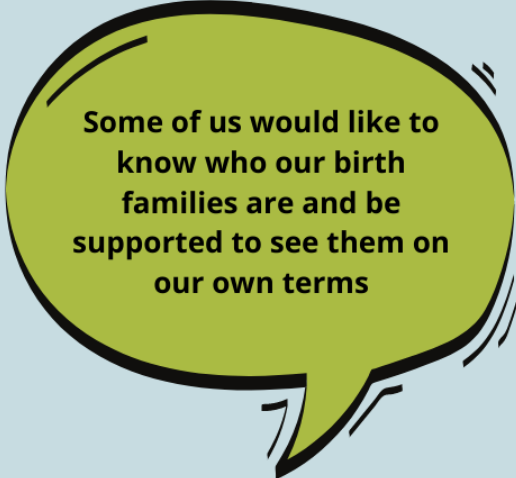
It would be good to have some more advice and support about healthy sex and relationships



It's often hard to talk to foster carers about sex and relationships



We want to be able to contact our PA or social worker easily when we really need them



Some of us would like to know who our birth families are and be supported to see them on our own terms



**We will:**

- Help children and young people know their life-story and understand why they are living in care if they would like to
- Support children and young people to build and maintain good relationships with birth and extended families, wherever possible, to make sure they have strong support networks outside of our care.
- Develop relationships with children and young people, which are built on trust and respect.
- Celebrate achievements, events and key milestones.
- Reduce the stigma that children and young people often face because they are living or have lived in care. This includes the language that we use ourselves, the actions we take, and the way that services work to support them.
- Make sure all communication is understood, especially if English is not a young person's first language and/or if they have any speech, language or communication needs.
- Make sure everyone working with children and young people has an improved understanding of gender identity and sexual orientation, so that young people feel respected, supported and empowered to be themselves.
- Take steps to make sure we have a consistent workforce so that there are fewer changes in Personal Advisors, Social Workers and other professionals. Where a change needs to happen, we will tell children and young people about this as soon as possible, and before any change happens.
- Keep in touch with children and young people, through PAs, after they leave care, if they would like this. Even if a young person moves away from Devon for any reason, we will still check in with them if they would like that.
- Understand the links between young people's sense of identity and belonging, and their mental health and wellbeing.

**We will:**


- Help children and young people learn about healthy sex and relationships.
- Support foster carers, through their training and inductions, to help young people find it easier to talk to them about sex, relationships, identity and belonging.
- Support young people to develop wider networks and good relationships with the key adults in their lives.

**How we will know we are making a difference:**


- Children and young people tell us that they have stronger and more trustworthy relationships with the adults in their life.
- Children and young people tell us that they have supportive friendships and healthy romantic relationships (if they are in one).
- Social workers and personal advisors change much less, meaning children and young people are able to build better relationships with them over time.
- Children and young people are more likely to keep in touch with us after they leave care, so we can best help and support them if they need and want it.
- More young people benefit from Family Group Conferences, with the aim of developing strong links with family, friends, and their communities.

## **Listening, hearing and understanding: children and young people make their voice heard and shape how services are designed and delivered**

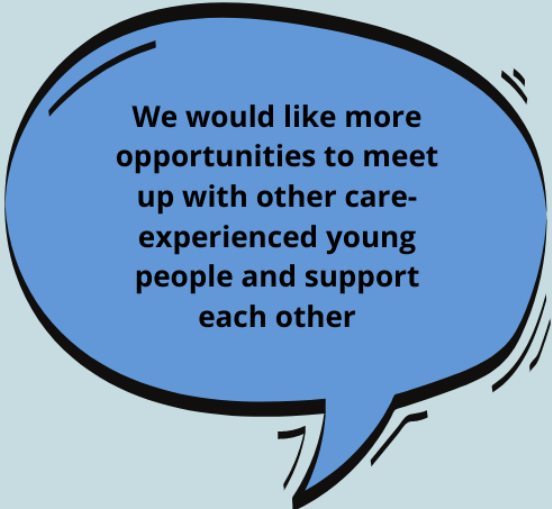
What children and young people say to us..




**We want to make  
our voice heard  
about the things that  
affect us**



**We should be  
listened to whenever  
a decision is being  
made about our lives**



**We would like more  
opportunities to meet  
up with other care-  
experienced young  
people and support  
each other**



**We don't want to be  
spoken about as if we  
weren't there or as if  
we were just a statistic**

**We will:**

- Put the views, interests and lived experience of young people at the heart of how services are designed and delivered
- Introduce children and young people to the Participation Team when they come into our care and let them know how they can make their voice heard.
- Continue to expand the use of the Mind Of My Own (MOMO) app.
- Set up opportunities for children and young people to meet other care-experienced young people.
- Enable care-experienced young people to play an active role in staff recruitment.
- Organise opportunities for children and young people to make their voice heard directly with the people who help make the decisions.
- Be honest with children and young people about what is possible to do and what is not, and why that is.
- Support children and young people to access independent visiting and advocacy services to make sure they are fully represented in the decisions affecting their lives.
- Make sure the views, interests and lived experiences of children and young people are listened to and taken into account in all individual plans and reviews.
- Proactively seek the views and experiences of children and young people who we may not hear from as much. For example, through the Youth Offending Service, Police, Youth Services and mental health services. We will make sure all services are informed and shaped by children and young people.
- Support children and young people to be active and engaged members of their community and wider society.

**How we will know we are making a difference:**

- Children and young people tell us that they are able to make their voice heard and feel that they have a say in the decisions which affect their life.
- What children and young people tell us about their lives and experiences in care, wherever possible, leads directly to positive changes, and we always let them know when and how that happens.
- We show that the views and interests of children and young people, are at the heart all levels of decision-making.
- We are held to account for the things that we agree we will do.
- More children and young people are making use of independent visiting and advocacy services while in care.
- More children and young people are regularly involved with participation groups, events and activities

## **Safe and protected: children and young people are safe and protected from harm, abuse and exploitation**

What children and young people say to us..



**We will:**

- Work together to protect children and young people from harm, abuse and exploitation, whether it happens inside or outside the home, or online.
- Make sure where children and young people live, study, work or have fun are safe and inclusive spaces.
- Support children and young people early to avoid criminal activity and risky behaviours.
- Continue to support children and young people and strive for their best outcomes unconditionally if they are in the youth or criminal justice system.
- Recognise young people 'as a young person first' in all interactions with the criminal justice system and police.
- Work restoratively with children and young people, if they come into contact with police officers and criminal justice system, making sure we build on their strengths, are child-centred, trauma-informed and have their voice at the heart.
- Work together to understand the risks and vulnerabilities that children and young people may experience in life, making sure we take every step possible to avoid them being criminalised unnecessarily.
- Communicate and work closely between different agencies, at all levels, to share intelligence, knowledge and understanding of the issues affecting children and young people. Wherever possible, we will work together as partner agencies to achieve solutions to complex and multi-faceted harms.
- Improve our skill, knowledge and confidence in identifying and responding to child sexual abuse and sexually harmful behaviour to better support children and young people.
- Develop our understanding of exploitation and children who go missing from home, in order that our response to risks is effective and that we work with young people as early as possible to prevent contextual safeguarding risks and vulnerabilities.

**How we will know we are making a difference:**

- Children and young people tell us that they feel safer and more protected in their homes and communities.
- Children and young people are better protected from harm, abuse and exploitation.
- Children and young people are less likely to be involved in any criminal activity, either as a victim of crime or as an offender.

## **Independence: young people leave care and become independent and thriving adults**

What children and young people say to us..

**We would like work and training opportunities to link in more with our own skills, interests and circumstances**

**We should be made aware of what support we are entitled to when we turn 18**

**We would like some advice, guidance and support about managing money, including setting up bank accounts and renting**

**Financial and practical support is really important in helping us live independently**

**Mental health needs and instability in the rest of our lives might be why we are struggling to access work and training opportunities**

**Apprenticeships and work experience are really valuable in helping us take the first step in our working lives**

### **We will:**

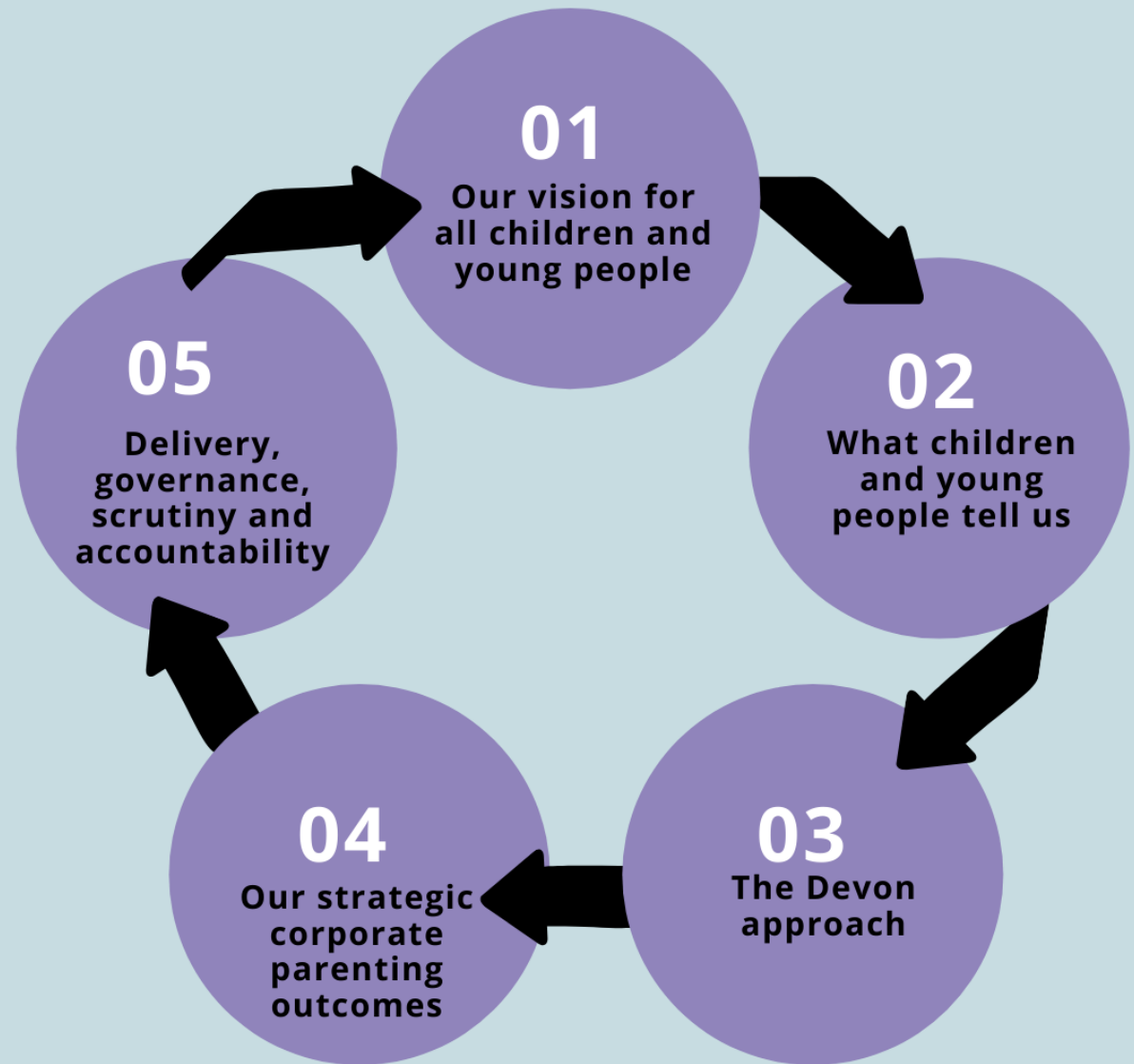
- Support young people to prepare, as early as possible, for adulthood and independence through practical, emotional and some financial support, advice and guidance.
- Help young people save some money regularly while they're in care to set them up for later in life.
- Help young people learn about managing money and living independently through a Tenancy-ready course.
- Support young people practically, emotionally and financially, if they are in Further or Higher Education, and link them into other forms of funding to make sure there are no barriers to being able to continue learning.
- Provide more apprenticeships, traineeships, work experience and internships, which cover a broader range of organisations and roles.
- Help young people take up education, employment and training opportunities by helping them get support for their mental health and wellbeing and overcome any logistical barriers like transport.
- Work with young people, from an early age, to build up their skills and confidence so that they are ready to take advantage of work and training opportunities.

### **How we will know we are making a difference:**

- Young people tell us that they feel more able to live independently as a young adult and sort out things like budgeting, paying rent and bills, and claiming financial support.
- Young people tell us that their ambitions for life - like jobs, homes, families, and education - feel more achievable and that they are more motivated to reach them.
- More young people have an up-to-date Pathway Plan (meaning it has been reviewed with the young person in the last 6 months) after they turn 16.
- More young people are either studying, working, or on a training scheme or apprenticeship.
- More young people are learning to drive, so that they can be more independent in adult life.
- More young people are attending University.



# Strategy Cycle



## Delivering on our aims, making a difference and improving lives

This strategy is about improving the lives of children and young people who experience care. The key to this is turning words on a page into actions and outcomes.

### **Putting our plans into practice**

We will work together to deliver a set of strategic actions, which will be outlined in the Corporate Parenting Actions Plan and delivered through multi-agency groups.

### **Engagement and co-production**

We will continue to engage closely with care-experienced children and young people to understand their experiences, identify where more work still needs to be done and co-develop shared solutions. They will hold us accountable to what we commit to doing.

### **Checking on progress**

Checking on our progress is a vital part of the process. This is how we will know and understand what difference we are making. By doing this, it enables us to get to the bottom of why something might not be happening quite the way it should, allowing us to put it right. Checking on progress will require a combination of quantitative measures, and hearing the voice and lived experience of children and young people.

### **Being accountable**

To make sure we do what we say we will, we will be accountable to children and young people with care experience, to the public (through our elected members), and to each other.

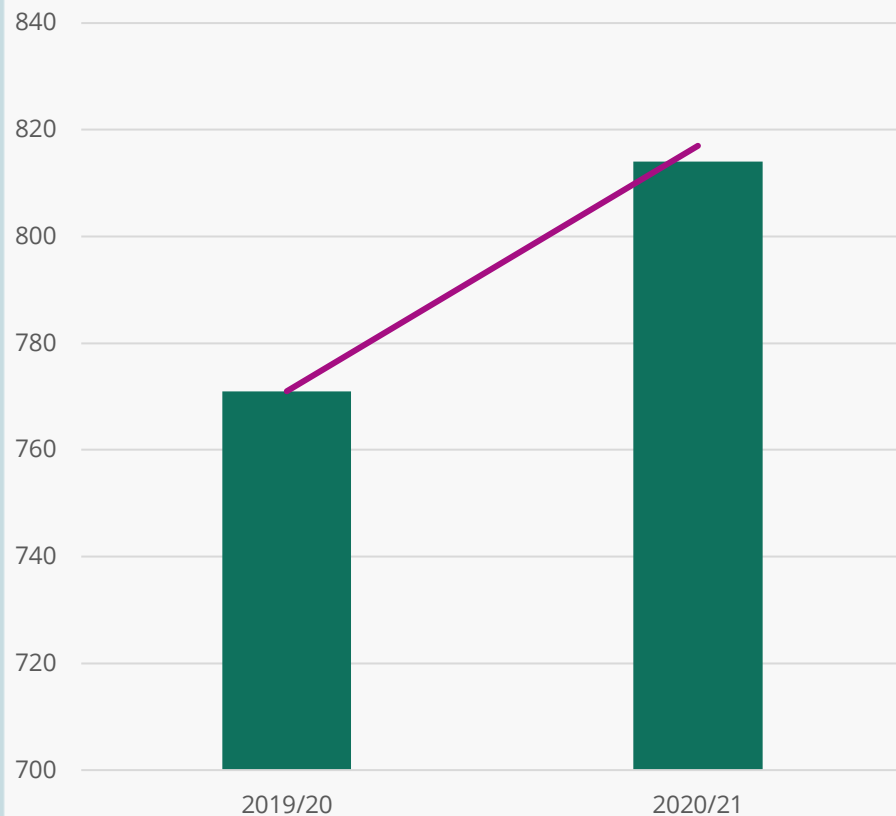
# Appendices

1. At a glance: care experience in Devon
2. Strategy summaries
2. Legislative context
3. Needs profile
4. Local strategic context
5. Using language that cares
6. Participation and engagement
7. The Promise in full
8. How we will check on progress and make a difference
9. Scrutiny

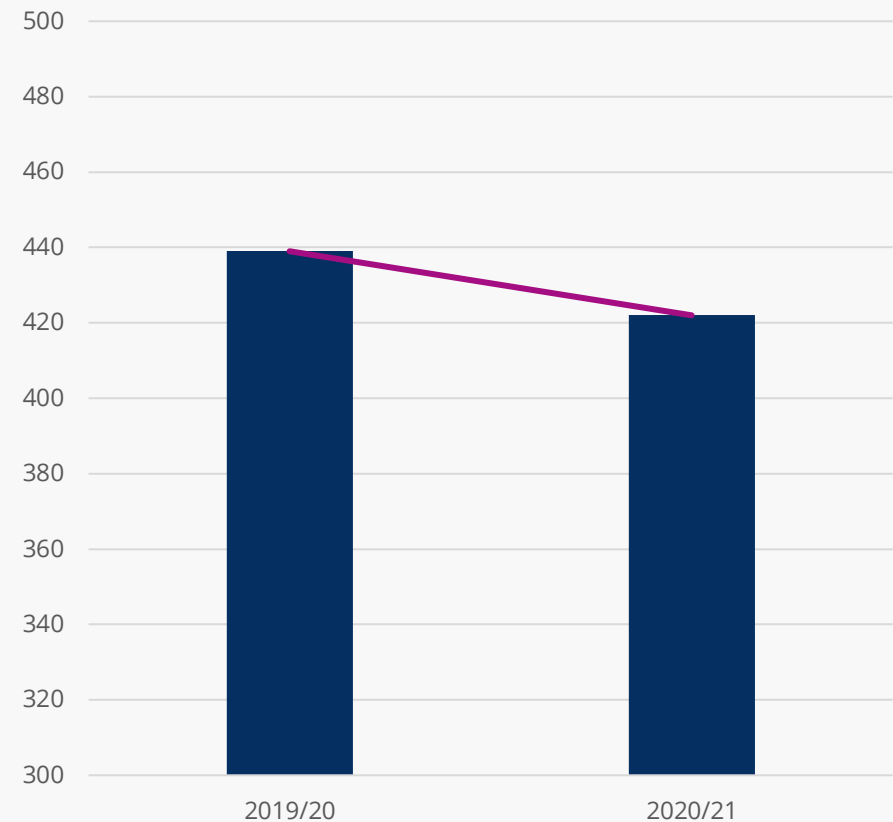
## At a glance: care experience in Devon

The number of children and young people in our care has risen in recent years. Between April 2020 and April 2021, there was a 6% increase. 56 in every 10,000 under 18 year-olds in Devon are now in our care.

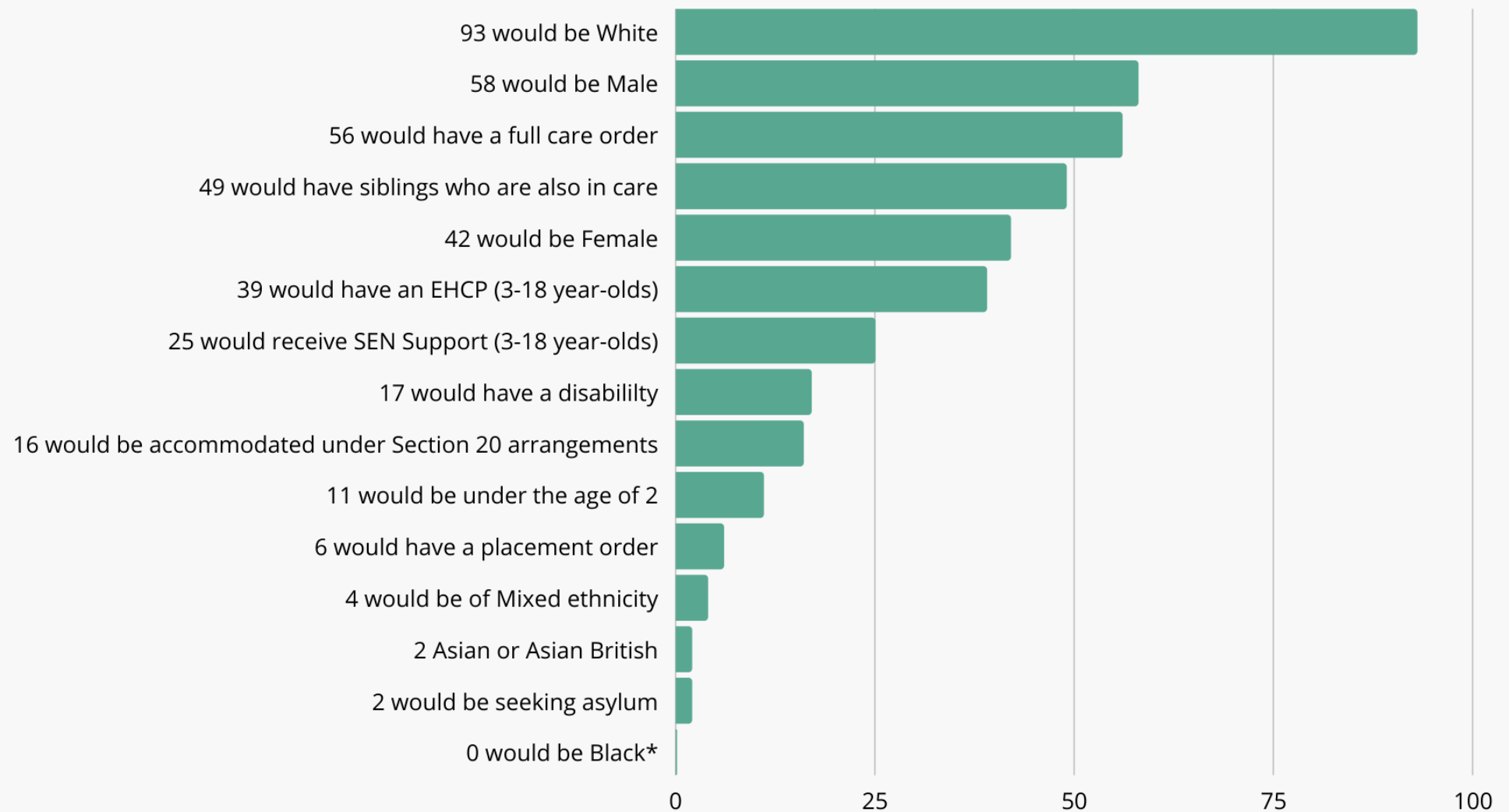
Number of children in the care of Devon County Council at financial year-end



Number of young people, 17-25, in receipt of leaving care services from Devon County Council at financial year-end

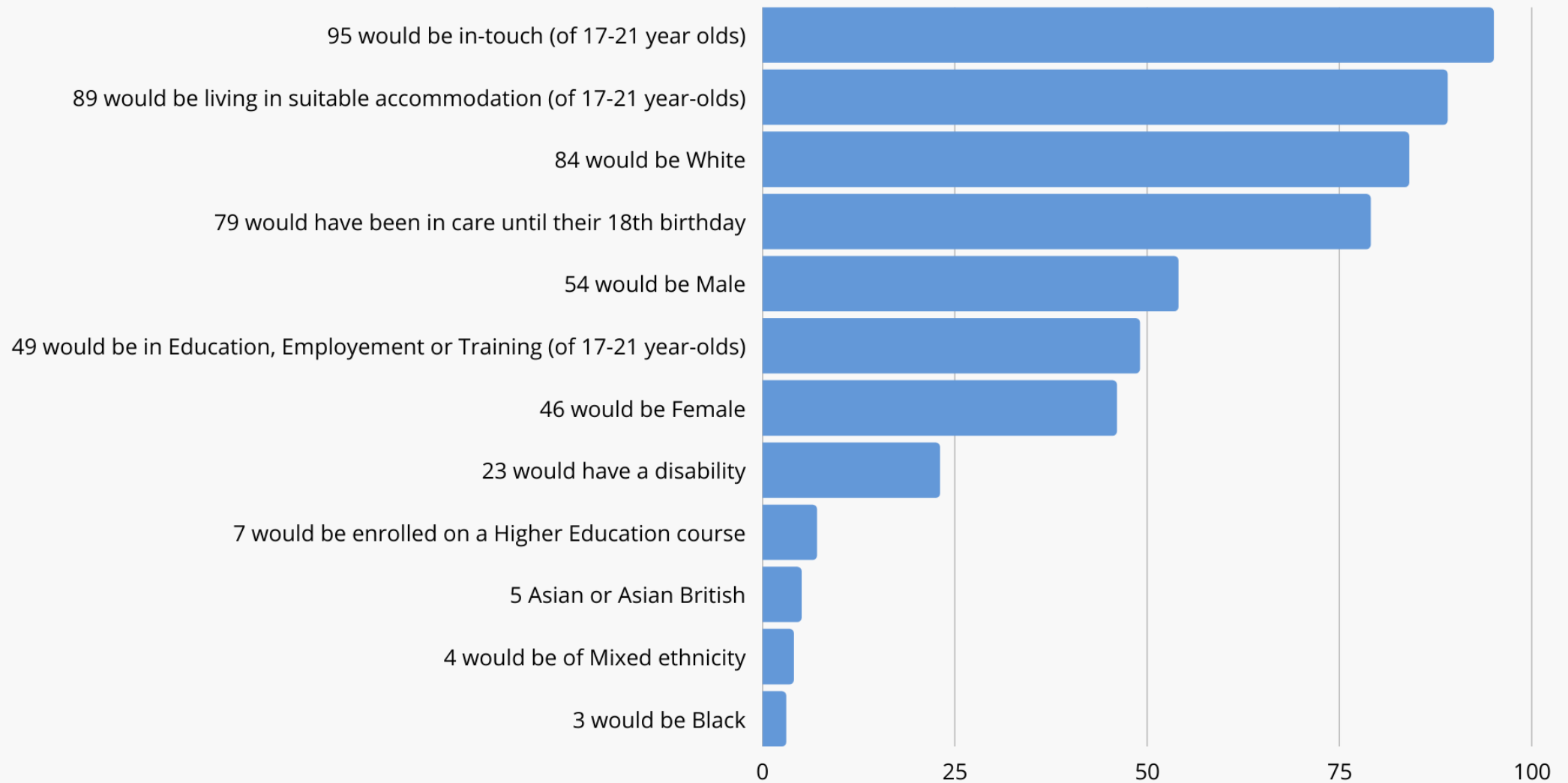


If there were 100 children and young people in our care..



\*0.1% of children and young people in our care are Black

If there were 100 young people receiving leaving care services in Devon..



## Strategy summaries

- [Young People's version](#)
- [Easy-read version](#)

## Legislative context

### Legislation

- [Children Act 1989](#)
- [Children \(Leaving Care\) Act 2000](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Children and Families Act 2014](#)
- [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#)

### Statutory guidance

- [Applying Corporate Parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#)

### National strategies and reviews

- [Keep on Caring: supporting young people from care to independence](#)
- [The Independent Review of Children's Social Care \(The Case for Change\)](#)
- [National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers: Second Report](#)

## **Needs profile**

- [Devon Corporate Parenting Needs Profile](#)

## **Local strategic context**

- [Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2023](#)
- [SEND Strategy](#)
- Sufficiency Strategy
- [Integrated Care System for Devon](#)

## **Using language that cares**

Check out this [Video](#) to find out more from our young people about the importance of using language that cares. We are working with young people and professionals to make sure we are communicating in the best ways.

## **Jargon buster**

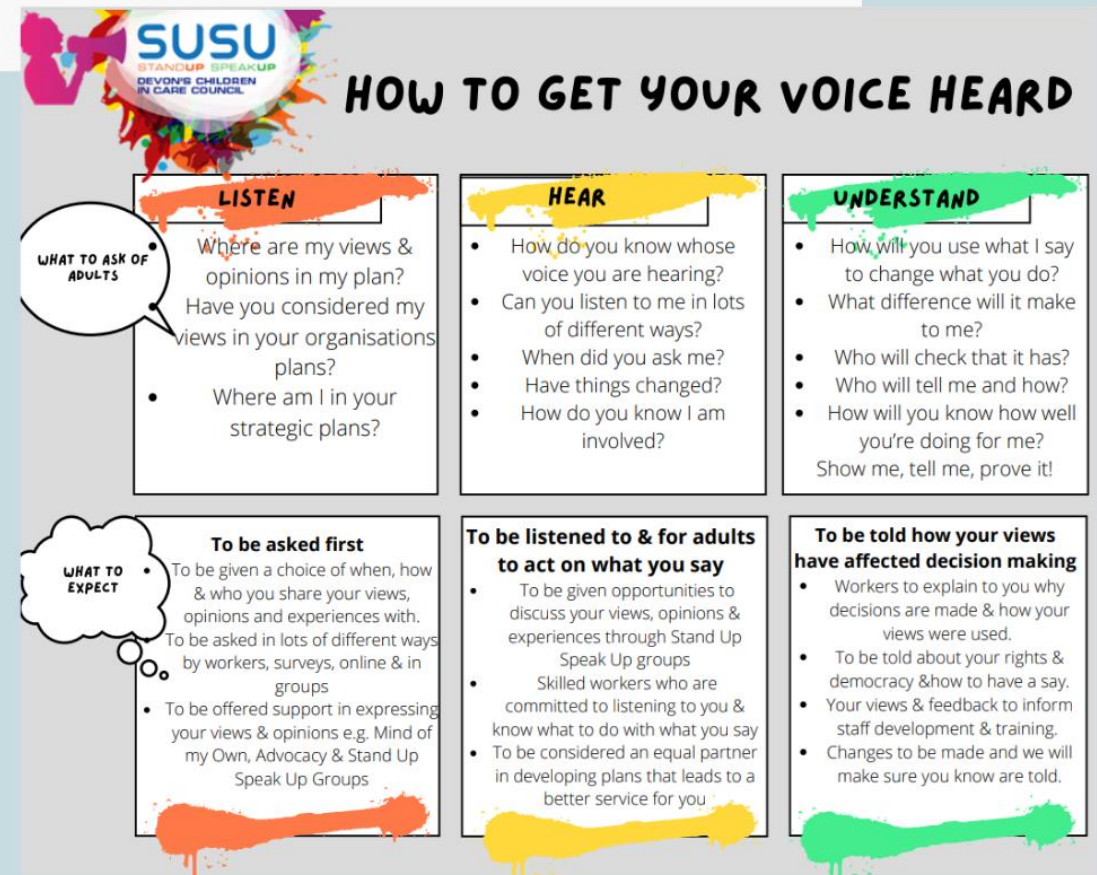
We've put together a useful guide on the [SUSU website](#), explaining what a lot of the different words and phrases we use mean.

## Participation and engagement

Our Social care Engagement Strategy sets out how we will listen, hear, and understand the children and young people we care for. We want principles and approaches of participation, engagement and co-production to be a part of all that we do in Devon. This means all adults, who work with care-experienced children and young people, are skilled, knowledgeable and committed to putting their voice at the heart of both individual and strategic decision-making.

### Children and young people's toolkit

The image (below right) is a toolkit for children and young people to use to make sure they are getting their voice heard and are involved in the decision-making process.



Check out The Promise in full below..

## Inform me!

### We will..

- Talk to you about why you are in care and help you understand more about your family.
- Help you understand what happens when you become an adult and leave care.
- Make sure you know a person you trust who you can speak to for support.
- Let you know all you need to know.
- Speak to you in ways you understand and that are caring.
- Let you know personally if we are no longer going to be able to work with you or are leaving.

## Involve me!

### We will..

- Include you and listen to you in meetings.
- Use positive language if we are talking about you.
- Ask you about which possessions you want to keep and who you want to stay in touch with.
- Try to let you stay overnight at your new place, to test it out, if you need to move home.
- Try to give you choices about things, based on your views and wishes.
- Help you get your voice heard.
- Do what we say we're going to do. We won't make a promise if we can't keep it.
- Protect your confidentiality by not telling your foster carers what you tell us unless you are at risk of serious harm. If we need to tell other people, we will explain that to you.

## Celebrate me!

### We will..

- Celebrate your achievements - we will have high ambitions and aspirations for you.
- Celebrate religious festivals with you, or help you celebrate them with others.
- Celebrate your 'moving in to foster-family day' each year if you would like that.

## Respect me!

### We will..

- Check your bedroom sensitively and ask your consent. We will respect your personal space and belongings.
- Not make you stand out as being in care. We will have a conversation with you to find out what you prefer.
- Treat you fairly and equally in the family so that you feel at home.
- Try to make sure that if you stay over with other people, that you know them and enjoy being with them.
- Understand what it means to be a teenager and the need to take some controlled risks in life.
- Understand and respect your identity, including your religion or beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, disabilities or health needs and ethnicity.
- Help you keep hold of your birth language and culture.

## Support me!

### We will..

- Help you make happy memories.
- Support you to make friends and stay in touch with all the people who are important to you.
- Support you to build your confidence and overcome your fears.
- Support you to do your best in school – especially if you're having difficulties at school, like with bullying.
- Help you find work experience opportunities related to what you're interested in.
- Support you where possible to have a mobile phone and use it safely from age 11.
- Support you to have a healthy lifestyle in body and mind.
- Support you with opportunities to try new things and explore your interests, ambitions and aspirations.

**If you feel that a Promise is not being followed, please talk this through with your foster carer, social worker or IRO.**

**Occasionally there are very particular reasons why something might not be possible. This should be explained to you in a way you understand.**

# Corporate parenting

## Governance structure

### Governance, accountability and scrutiny arrangements

These are the groups and reporting structures through which we will deliver our strategy, be accountable to what we say we will do, and ultimately make sure we are achieving positive outcomes for care-experienced children and young people in Devon.

#### Corporate Parenting Strategic Partnership Board

- Development and partnership sign up to Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Agree shared strategic priorities
- Oversight of Corporate Parenting Action plan
- Oversight of performance and outcomes in priority areas
- Participation of children and young people

CORPORATE  
PARENTING  
STRATEGIC  
PARTNERSHIP  
BOARD

CHILDREN AND  
YOUNG PEOPLE

OPERATIONAL  
GROUPS

#### Operational groups

- Voice of children and young people
- Themes from monthly challenge forum
- Quantitative data
- Management of Permanence Tracker
- Themes from audit and IRO challenge
- Child level information
- Action plans and progress updates

HOMES AND  
HOUSING

HEALTH,  
WELLBEING AND  
IDENTITY

EDUCATION,  
EMPLOYMENT AND  
TRAINING AND  
INDEPENDENCE

PARTICIPATION,  
ENGAGEMENT AND  
CO-PRODUCTION

SAFETY AND PROTECTION FROM HARM (CROSS-CUTTING THEME)

# Scrutiny

## **The role of Elected Members**

Councillors play a fundamental role in protecting and supporting care-experienced children and young people by advocating for improved services for care-experienced young people, as well as scrutinising and challenging services to achieve optimal outcomes.

Elected members will scrutinise the delivery of our aims and principles as set out in this strategy, through the Corporate Parenting Strategic Partnership Board. Working with children and young people, to act as a 'critical friend', they will check on progress to make sure children and young people with care-experience are seeing improved outcomes in their lives.

## **Corporate Parenting guide**

The Local Government Association (LGA) have produced a resource pack to support Elected Members to be effective corporate parents and 'critical friends'. The pack contains information on the relevant legislation and policy reviews, local case studies, as well as a set of key lines of enquiry.

Scan the QR code on the right to download the guide.

