

# Executive Decision Report

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**Report of the Director of Education & Children's  
Services**  
**Annual Review of Leicester City's Pledge for Looked  
After Children and Young People**

Lead director: Rachel Dickinson

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Scrutiny: 25<sup>th</sup> April 2013  
Corporate Parent Forum: April 2013

Decision to be taken by: Assistant City Mayor for  
Children, Young People and Schools

Date Decision to be taken: 13 May 2013

## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected:
- Report author: Julie Jordan, Service Manager, LAC Safeguarding  
Caroline Tote, Head of Service, Children's Safeguarding  
Andy Smith, Director – Children's Social Care & Safeguarding
- Contact details: 252 8403, 252 5178, 252 8306

### 1. Summary

This report details the work of the Children in Care Council in 2012 towards evaluating Leicester city's Pledge for Looked After Children. The Pledge is a mandatory requirement for Local Authorities to set out in real terms what children and young people in and leaving care can expect from the Local Authority and its partners in having services delivered to them. The Pledge must be aspirational, lead to improvements in the lives of Looked After Children and be reviewed with children and young people on an annual basis. We are now entering the third year of the Pledge and this report outlines the Annual Review of 2012.

### 2. Recommendations

For Executive to note the report and the recommendations for activity in 2013.

### 3. Supporting information including options considered:

The Annual Review of the Pledge enables Local Authorities to assess the progress made in delivering services to Looked After Children. The Annual Review focusses on what children and young people tell us what is and what is not working well for them. Local Authorities are required to listen to their Children in Care Council (CICC) and to consider if service provision needs to change or improve. The CICC and Review of the Pledge are linked to the Corporate Parent Executive and Forum in that feedback gained from children/young people is framed under the Pledge themes which each of the Corporate Parent meetings focus on. In theory, the Corporate Parent Forum is informed of children's views in order for recommendations to be considered within the decision-making forums in a timely way.

Representative(s) of the CICC attend the Corporate Parent Forum to have an overview of reports/discussions about each Pledge theme. The role of the CICC representative/LAC Project Worker is to feedback to the CICC the decisions of the meeting.

Each year the Local Authority develops creative ways to gain feedback from Looked After children and young people via the CICC.

This report details the work completed in 2012 and makes recommendations for a different approach in 2013.

#### **4. Details of Scrutiny**

The report is informed by the views of children and young people who are looked after/leaving care. The report will go to a future Scrutiny Committee/Corporate Parent Forum and is likely to feature in Leicester City's Inspection for Looked After Children/Care Leavers in 2013/2014.

The previous inspection of Looked After Children's services carried out by Ofsted in December 2011 judged the overall effectiveness of services as good. Corporate parenting arrangements and the Children in Care Council was identified as a particular strength for the Council.

#### **5. Financial, legal and other implications**

##### 5.1 Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.  
*Martin Judson, Head of Finance. Ext. 39 7500*

##### 5.2 Legal implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.  
*Pretty Patel, Team Leader, Solicitor, Community Services Law. Ext. 29 7033*

##### 5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

There are no climate change implications arising from this report.  
*Anna Dodd, Environment Team Ext. 29 6732*

##### 5.4 Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Assessment has not been carried out on the Pledge Review although one theme of the Pledge is dedicated to quality/diversity in services.

##### 5.5 Other Implications

Corporate Parent Forum – ensuring the views of children and young people are listened to and taken account of in planning for and improving services in 2013.

**6. Background information and other papers:**

**7. Summary of appendices:**

Main Report Appendix 1 – Main Report

Appendix 2 – Feedback from children and young people

Appendix 3 – Pledge Manifestos

Appendix 4 – Pledge for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

**8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?**

No

**9. Is this a “key decision”?**

Yes

**Children & Young People's Social Care and Safeguarding Division**

**Annual Report of the Pledge for Looked After Children 2012**

**1. Introduction**

1.1 This report details the work of the Children in Care Council (CICC) in 2012 towards reviewing the Pledge for Leicester City's Looked After children. The Pledge is a mandatory requirement of Local Authorities to have in place, to consult with LAC about the services they receive and improvements that need to be in place to deliver the Pledge outcomes.

1.2 The Pledge is divided into 6 themes of the 5 main outcomes of the former ECM Framework and an additional theme to quality assure services in how they deliver fair and accessible services across the equality and diversity spectrum.

1.3 The Pledge is about how Leicester City Council and its key partners provide and develop services to LAC and young people in/leaving care.

1.4 The Annual Review of the Pledge is an opportunity to hear from children and young people about whether the Pledge, in the main, is working or needs further work to improve services.

The Pledge is now in its third year of implementation having had its second annual review in 2012.

1.5 This report details:-

- The activity undertaken in 2012 to gain the views of LAC/young people.
- The feedback from LAC/young people about services provided to them.
- Recommendations for activity in 2013.
- Review of the Pledge in 2013/14

2. In 2012 the following activity has been undertaken by CICC towards reviewing the Pledge, with a total of 73 children/young people.

- a) Locality meetings (May/July/October) in Braunstone, Rushey Mead, Beaumont Leys – meeting young people 10+ years of age in closer proximity to their home.
- b) One younger children's event at Curve Theatre (April 2012) for under 10 year olds.
- c) Annual Review of Pledge – November 2012
- d) Film production – "You Promised – We Asked".

2.1 **The 3 locality meetings** focussed on asking young people their views of their care/services using the following framework:-

- Coming into care.
- Staying in care.
- Leaving care.

2.1.1. The meetings were planned by the Audit Group of the CICC (older young people) who devised games and discussion sessions to gain information.

2.1.2. It is important to note that in this year the CICC Audit Group have been given more autonomy in how they planned events and resources for the meetings. The feedback received was written down and collated to evaluate against the Pledge. We would stress the feedback gained was as a result of a dynamic conversation in meetings, not a research methodology in relation to quantifying results.

2.2 **The younger children's event** focussed on an interactive play experience for under 10 year olds held at Curve Theatre. Curve Theatre staff, CICC, Social Care & Safeguarding Division staff worked together to create several play scenes based on the 6 Pledge themes, with the final part of the event holding a 'Teddy Bears' Picnic'. A group of foster carers created a puppet show for the children at the end of the event. This event was developed and coordinated by a student social worker on placement within the Children's Rights/Participation Service and used as part of his portfolio in placement (Yateen Makwana).

2.3 **The Annual Review of the Pledge**, held at the Peepul Centre in St Matthews area of the City, November 2012.

2.3.1 All LAC/young people aged 12 years plus were invited, the difference this year requesting Social Workers/carers/staff to bring along their Looked After children. The purpose of this was to ensure there is ownership across the division for meeting the outcomes of the Pledge and in respectfully listening to our LAC about what they have to say about our services. The event was planned by the Children's Rights/Participation Service, the CICC and facilitators and external theatre production co-ordinator. In addition, Councillor Dempster, Assistant Mayor, Rachel Dickinson - Strategic Director, Andy Smith - Director, 2 x Heads of Service, 4 Service Managers, Team Manager representation, Social Workers, Carers and representatives from partners – YOS/Virtual Head Teacher/School attended.

2.3.2 This event was hosted by 2 members of the CICC, acting as presenters. A film created by the CICC was played to illustrate feedback from Pledge events, followed by table top discussion between Corporate Parents/LAC, Pledge manifesto for 2013 by Senior Managers/Lead Member, and finally a "Question Time" session – authentically recreated between a Corporate Parent Panel and a CICC Panel receiving questions from young people in the audience.

2.4 **The film "You Promised – We Asked"** was developed by the CICC over several weekends with CICC facilitators and Soft Touch. The CICC worked together to devise the storylines of feedback that they had received from LAC from all the events noted in this report. The film had its premiere at the Pledge Review event. The film has since been shown at various events including Full Council – to bring to life key messages from children/young people. The film will be used for a

variety of training purposes and can be accessed through the Children's Rights/Participation Service.

**3. Pledge Manifesto by Corporate Parents**

3.1 In the Pledge Review 2 Senior Officers and the Lead Member for Children's Services were asked to write out 3 key areas that they would Pledge to do in 2013 for LAC/Children's Pledge:-

3.2 The Pledge Manifestos are noted in Appendix 3.

**4. Recommendations for activity in 2013**

- To hold three Service area meetings in April, June and September 2013 led by Senior Managers of the division with CICC. (Resources, Child Care Teams, Safeguarding Unit).
  - Annual Review of Pledge 2013 event. (October 2013)
  - Production of a CICC film made by CICC. (Summer 2013)
  - Younger children's event (Summer 2013).
  - A meeting between LCC CICC and Leicestershire CICC to share good practice. (November 2013).
  - To incorporate the timing and findings of the consultation of children placed Out of Authority in the Annual Review of the Pledge to ensure these are measured against the Pledge.
5. In 2013/14 the Pledge will be revised and re-launched. This will be based on feedback we have received from Children in Care, but will be a sharper summary of the areas identified as important by our looked after children.

## Appendix 2

### **1. Feedback from Children and Young People 2012 – LCC Pledge for LAC**

This section divides the six themes of the Pledge and details what comments children/young people have said about services they receive. Each of these themes will have an action plan and be fed into Corporate Parent Forums in 2013.

#### **1.2 Stay Safe (10 priorities set out by Corporate Parent)**

- Young people felt they would feel more safe if they knew when they were having a change of Social Worker, and were introduced to that Social Worker in advance.
- Not all young people know when they would see their Social Worker again, or aware of their mobile phone numbers.
- Not all young people had visited their placement before going to live there even though these were not in emergency placement.
- Young people extended staying safe to mean personal safety, ie road safety, phone charged/calling carers, on-line safety.
- Older young people told us that if their voice is not listened to in school/by Social Worker – led to poor behaviour – example given where IRO in LAC Review supported this young person.
- All young people stated they now felt safe in their placements. A few (3) had experienced levels of bullying behaviour but this had since stopped.
- All young people had someone to turn to if in a crisis.
- Young children told us (through Lester Bear stories) that they had cuddles, nice kind carers, warm and happy home. The importance of this is a sense of belonging.

#### **1.3 Being Healthy (7 priorities set out by Corporate Parents)**

- Young people positive that they could see the LAC Nurse at a place of their choice.
- All young people informed us that they were registered with a GP and had seen their dentist in a year.
- Younger children (under 10s) knew what a healthy diet/menu plan was, what foods were unhealthy and know about cleaning their teeth as important.
- Young people talked about a range of sporting activities they are involved in to keep them healthy (see Positive Activities).
- Older young males (3) of 14+ years of age told us they contraception easily accessible to them, how to use contraception. All older young people 14+ told us that sex education is widely available to them in schools/residential care homes and some foster carer placements.
- Young people told us that they know about the importance of sleep and the health benefits of this.
- Young people told us about their anxieties and worries – not knowing their care plan, where they would live permanently and when – finding out that their Social Worker was changing, changing schools all had caused anxiety. This is related to emotional health and wellbeing and building resilience.



- No young people informed us that they had had a choice of placements – they were placed where they were placed.

#### **1.4 Positive Activities** (10 priorities set out by Corporate Parents)

- Young people aware of Leisure Fund. All younger people had opportunity to be engaged in activities in/out of school, whether this be sport or leisure, drama etc.
- All young people told us they had had a holiday in recent times including America, Euro Disney, France, Skegness, leisure parks, caravanning.
- Some young people had a passport, some did not and some did not know. One young person's passport had come too late to take part in a school trip (however this was in 2011) but young people emphasised the importance they felt about this.
- Some young people did not like having their Looked After Child Reviews at a school and wanted to chair their Review.

#### **1.5 Enjoy and Achieve** (10 priorities from Corporate Parents)

- All young people had taken part in the celebratory events (award ceremonies).
- Young people spoke positively about being encouraged to attend education and one young person's attendance had increased to 90% with support he had – however not all young people knew they had the support to be in education up to age of 25, they all felt it was 18 years of age.
- All young people had access to a computer in placement – not all 15+ young people had their own laptop.
- All young people 14+ knew who to go to in school (designated teacher) for support.
- One young person informed of having to change schools when moving placement. This had been against their wish but had since settled there.
- One young person stated at one point she did not have enough support in school and did not believe it was being taken high enough up in the school (in 2012). This has now been dealt with.

#### **1.6 Financial Wellbeing** (9 priorities from Corporate Parents)

- Young people told us about the ways in which they earned money – paper rounds, taking part in events where there were rewards (vouchers), having pocket money.
- Young people spoke positively of work experience, preparing them for the world of work.
- Younger children could talk about savings, and why they saved and what for (trips, holidays, toys).
- The most feedback received was from older young people 16+, regarding the Leaving Care Grant. All young people felt this was not enough – in their words “not enough to support us today” with increased bills, bus fares, food.
- One young person talked a lot about the effects of leaving care too early and the impact on him that he was not able to stay beyond 18 years of age in his

foster placement and the way in which he was moved not being well planned or a positive experience, not equipped to pay bills or contact with someone at a weekend if in a crisis. (Historical to 2012)

- More young people are now telling us that discussions are occurring about staying in care beyond 18 years of age, but sometimes discussions held too late.
- One young person (15 years of age) in care 5 weeks – not aware of financial entitlements beyond pocket money, ie birthday/transport/leisure activity. Two out of three young people knew about driving lessons – one did not.

### **1.7 Good Services that are fair and meet your needs** (8 priorities from Corporate Parents)

- Young people told us about choice of Social Workers and felt they did not know they had a choice. No young people had questioned this (with the exception of a CICC member).
- All but one young person knew about the Children's Rights Service and how to contact them - some young people had used the service.
- One young person stated he did not have the cultural diet he had at home in his foster placement. He had spoken to his Social Worker and although this took time to resolve it was resolved with some level of satisfaction.
- Young people told us that in foster care they felt they were treated fairly alongside the foster carer's children.

### **2. Feedback about the Pledge**

Throughout the year we have heard a range of comments about Leicester City's Pledge.

- From external agencies/inspections/other CICC's how positive it is, how it is audited etc.
- From young people that it is hard to know what all the statements mean and difficult to say if it meets their needs, but all young people agreed with having a Pledge.

### **3. Other comments**

- Young people asked that a survey be undertaken of Social Workers as to who knows about it and uses it with young people. Young people (CICC reps) have noticed the Pledge is regularly taken down at Grey Friars and not replaced.
- From professionals, carers, Members that the Pledge is too long, still not all Social Workers and carers know about the Pledge.

### **4. Actions to take forward in 2013**

- a) All of the feedback in 2012 will have an action plan to be fed into the Corporate Parent Executive and Corporate Parent Forums to discuss in 2013 (JJ/CICC).
- b) The recommendations for activity in Appendix 1, point 4 – be progressed (agreed at DMT) (JJ/SDMT to plan).

- c) To reproduce the Pledge in 2013/14 for a set of SMART targets to gain feedback from children and young people (Corporate Parent Exec Board).
- d) To ensure the actions outlined in Appendix 3 in relation to 'Pledge Manifestos' are followed through within the structure of meetings with the CICC in 2013 (Service Area Managers with CICC/LAC).

Julie Jordan  
Service Manager  
Children & Young People's Safeguarding Unit  
February 2013

**2012 Annual Review of the Pledge for Looked After Children**

**Pledge Manifestos 2013**

1. **Lead Member, Vi Dempster, Pledges to:-**

As Chair of the Corporate Parenting Forum I will continue to champion the needs, wishes and views of looked after children with all Councillors and Officers, invite the City Mayor to attend one Corporate Parenting Forum a year, and ensure that young people attend and contribute to the forum.

I will work to ensure that all council departments contribute to improving outcomes for looked after children and those leaving care through them directly identifying and providing services for children, young people and their foster families.

I will maintain contact with looked after children in a range of settings such as visiting our residential homes and attending the Children in Care Council so that I can listen to their views and wishes and take these forward with officers.

2. **Service Director, Social Care & Safeguarding Service – Andy Smith**

I will continue to build a Social Work service that cares about and not just works with our children in care. I will guarantee that any changes made today to the Pledge are reflected in our social Work Standards and in the jobs your Social Workers carry out.

I will champion corporate parenting with all the other Directors who work in the council and ensure that issues for looked after children are kept on the agenda, and that Directors are always thinking about how their services can be used in a way that improves outcomes for our children in care and those leaving care.

I am involved in developing a specific Apprenticeship Scheme for our care leavers in the council that will lead to the council ear marking 6 apprenticeships for care leavers a year. I will also work to ensure that care leavers are given the right support to access the schemes and succeed.

I will work with other councils in the East Midlands so that we can share all the good practice happening in Leicester and learn from some of the good things going on in other councils. We know that we have one of the best Children in Care Councils in the region and there is a lot to be proud of, but we can also learn from others too.

### **3. Head of Service, Children's Social Work Teams – Jasmine Nembhard**

The development of Social Work profile

As the HOS for Children's Fieldwork, I pledge to ensure that all social workers write a social work profile for Looked After children who have a permanent care plan to give to their allocated child/ren. The profile will include information on the following:-

- Three reasons why they wanted to be a social worker.
- Their previous experience of being a social worker.
- Their hobbies and interests.
- An agreed area of commitment to the CYP on what they agree they (the social worker) will pledge to do with the young person (this will be something that they and the CYP agree they wish to prioritise to work on or change).

I will attend the CICC a minimum of 4 times per year to assess the impact of my pledge.

# This is our Pledge by Leicester City Council and our partner agencies to children & young people in our care and care leavers

You are a child or young person in our care. We (your corporate parents) want to care for you like any good parent would. This pledge to you lets you know what you can expect from us, as long as you are in care and have left care. These are the things that we want to provide for you while you are looked after by us.



## We want you to be healthy

Your corporate parents will:

1. Provide you with access to a range of health services to meet your individual needs
2. Ensure you are registered with a Doctor and a Dentist
3. Promote your emotional well-being and your ability to cope with things that worry you
4. Help you to maintain your personal hygiene and look after yourself
5. Provide easy to understand information and support to you which relates to healthy living, healthy lifestyle choices and sexual health
6. Provide access to leisure that promotes your health
7. Provide services and support for you if you are a parent



## We want you to stay safe

Your corporate parents will:

1. Provide you with a care placement that can meet your needs and where possible inform you about where you will be cared for.
2. When possible provide you with a profile of the carers or home where you will be looked after.
3. Make sure you have good information on a range of local support services and networks
4. Help you to be safe in your home
5. To listen to your views and take them seriously about who it is you would like to see whether it be your friends or family. But to make sure that the plan is safe and meets your needs.
6. Provide you with someone to speak on your behalf, when you want us to and make sure that you are aware of your rights
7. Meet with you regularly so we know you're safe
8. Enable you to do activities that are appropriate to your age and development, with a minimal level of risk that you understand and can cope with
9. Support you to make the right transition from care to independence at the right time for you.
10. Help you manage your tenancy



## We want you to enjoy and achieve

Your corporate parents will:

1. Believe in you and what you can achieve – have high hopes and expectations for you ALWAYS
2. Always encourage your hopes
3. Provide extra opportunities in and out of school for you when you need it and where it is best for you.
4. Ensure you receive a full and meaningful education
5. Provide you with access to activities and hobbies, including time away and access to fun things to do that are relevant to you
6. Provide you with the equipment you need to help you learn, including access to a computer
7. To provide you with additional support in school when needed, whether this be one to one support, or after school sessions. To also have you linked with a designated teacher for looked after children or a RALAC worker to help support you in your school
8. Provide information on the financial support that you are entitled to help you learn or study
9. Provide you with access to work experience and volunteering opportunities
10. Provide accommodation for you during holiday times if you are at university



## We want you to achieve Financial Well-Being

Your corporate parents will:

1. Work with you to develop your confidence, motivation and self-esteem
2. Encourage and support you to do things for yourself, to take responsibility, and to always encourage you to be INDEPENDENT
3. Provide access to information, ensuring you are aware of your entitlements, relating to pocket money, welfare benefits, budgeting and saving
4. Support your transport costs to help you get to work or college
5. Where necessary advocate on your behalf to help you gain higher education or employment
6. Provide support to help you stay in school, college, or work if you're finding it difficult
7. Ensure that we provide access to learning and work experience for you
8. Make sure that you are well prepared and that you receive help, support and guidance when you are 18 or when you leave care.
9. If further/higher education is your goal, all eligible looked after young people will receive a support package up until the age of 24, to assist you through your education



## We want you to be involved in Positive Activities

Your corporate parents will:

1. Ensure that we establish, support and work in partnership with the Children in Care Council
2. Ensure that you participate fully in your care and pathway planning AND Involve you in the development and delivery of our services to you
3. Support you to make and keep positive relationships
4. Involve you in the recruitment and selection of foster carers and staff
5. Provide chances for you to be involved in peer mentoring
6. Ensure you have the chance to be involved with community based groups and activities including volunteering and work experience
7. Support your involvement with other agencies
8. Reward your efforts and provide evidence to mark your successes and efforts
9. Ensure that we work with you and listen to your views and feelings about your own care
10. Ensure that you are equipped with a passport, bank account, national insurance number, birth certificate or immigration status so you are then able to be involved in relevant positive activities



## We will provide you with good services that are fair and meet your needs

Your corporate parents will:

1. Ensure that you understand our commitment to you - All young people receive a service that values diversity, promotes fairness and challenges discrimination
2. If you have a disability, or additional needs, we will ensure that this is ALWAYS taken into consideration when you are receiving any given service.
3. Ensure you have an allocated Social Worker who is available for you at the times you most need them and that you have a choice of a male or female worker, where this is possible.
4. Make sure that we provide a good service to all young people whatever their needs and have high aspirations for everyone
5. Challenge prejudice wherever you may experience it
6. Ensure that all our staff/carers are properly trained
7. Support you if you want to complain about something you are not happy about
8. Celebrate your important occasions with cards, gifts and other recognitions of your special occasions.

## 'Sign up to our pledge'

Rachel Dickinson  
Strategic Director for children

Vi Dempster  
Cabinet lead member for children

Sir Peter Soulsby  
City Mayor

