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As Chair of Stirling Community Planning Partnership Leadership Group and Leader of Stirling Council, I am pleased to introduce a new Corporate Parenting Strategy for Stirling.

Community Planning partners have an obligation to do our very best for the most vulnerable members of our communities. We know that the experiences of children and young people who experience care often fall short of those of their peers.

We will champion the rights of children and young people in our care and work to provide the care and support that we would want for our own children. To make a real difference, all agencies will work together to make improvements and achieve lasting change.

We want our children and young people who are looked after and who have experienced care to have opportunities to succeed, to enjoy school, to be healthy and happy and to have good relationships.

‘Getting it Right for all Children and Young People in Stirling - Stirling’s Children’s Services Plan 2017 – 2020’, reflects the national GIRFEC approach to support the wellbeing of our children and young people. The Children’s Services Plan recognises improving life outcomes for children and young people who are looked after as one of partners’ key improvement areas.

This Corporate Parenting Strategy will be key to ensuring that, along with our children and young people who experience care, we are able to demonstrate we have made a real difference.

There will be an increasing role for the Champions Board in improving outcomes for looked after children and young people in Stirling. The Champions Board has political and executive support from Stirling Council and from our partners who are corporate parents in Stirling. The Board will provide a forum for the views of young people who experience care and build meaningful dialogue between them and their corporate parents. It will work to ensure that this dialogue will influence change in our policy and practice.

Scot T. Farmer
The vision of Stirling Community Planning Partnership’s, ‘The Stirling Plan 2017 – 2027, is that ‘Stirling is somewhere everyone can thrive’. The Stirling Plan seeks to promote inclusive growth and to address inequalities wherever they are within Stirling.

Through the Stirling’s Children’s Services Plan community planning partners ‘want Stirling to be a nurturing, respectful and ambitious place for all children and young people, their families and communities across Stirling.’

As Corporate Parents, partners in Stirling know that there are greater life challenges for looked after children and young people. In general, looked after children and young people face potentially heightened emotional challenges; greater financial worries; a lack of family and friendship networks; tougher challenges around sustaining accommodation, engagement in further or higher education, and employment.

Children who are ‘looked after’ are considered to be either ‘looked after at home’ (living with a parent in their normal place of residence), or looked after away from home (living with carers provided, or financially supported, by the local authority).

Children and young people become looked after for a number of reasons. Most will have been affected by difficult experiences in their lives. Many will have experienced abuse or neglect, some will have significant disabilities and complex needs, some will be affected by the illness or death of a parent or some may be unaccompanied minors seeking asylum, or who have been illegally trafficked into the UK.
The wider social and economic context will present significant challenges for improvement as households with children are predicted to be the worst affected by welfare reforms. Changes expected to have the greatest impact include the benefits freeze, cuts to work allowance in Universal Credit and the two child policy. The Institute of Fiscal Studies and the Resolution Foundation forecast increases in child poverty across the UK of 50% by 2020.

However, corporate parents in Stirling are ambitious for the future of looked after children and young people and will:

- promote, support and safeguard the wellbeing of looked after children and young people;
- work to close the gap in life outcomes between looked after children and young people and their peers;
- keep our approach to corporate parenting under constant review, seeking out improvement wherever possible.

This means that all corporate parents will seek to better understand the needs of looked after children, and to improve services with their needs in mind. The voices of our young people will be central to this, with their experiences, goals and ambitions influencing improvement.
Background
Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

GIRFEC is the national approach in Scotland to improving outcomes and supporting the wellbeing of our children and young people by offering the right help at the right time from the right people. It supports them, and their parent(s) and carers, to work in partnership with the services that can help them. The national strategy, ‘Getting it Right for Looked After Children and Young People: early engagement, early permanence and improving the quality of care’ is a core part of the wider national approach.

Getting it Right for Children and Young People in Stirling:
Stirling Children’s Services Plan 2017 - 2020

Community Planning partners are committed to the principles of GIRFEC and the Children’s Services Plan provides a strategic framework for children and young people’s services in Stirling. The Plan is for all children and young people up to the age of 18 years, for care leavers up to the age of 25 and for their families.

A set of wellbeing outcomes, which are what Community Planning Partners want to achieve with children and young people in Stirling, is central to the Plan.

Children’s Services Plan outcomes address all of the national areas of wellbeing: safe; healthy; achieving; nurtured; active; respected; responsible; included. Some of the key outcomes for our looked after Children and Young People, are:

- Children and young people are protected from abuse, neglect or harm at home, at school and in the community
- Children and young people are risk aware and know how to stay safe
- Children and young people are physically healthy
- Children and young people are mentally and emotionally healthy
- The attainment gap relating to poverty, additional support needs and looked after children and young people is reduced
- Young people live in suitable housing, including young people leaving care
- Children and young people are engaged positively and respected in their community
- The views of children and young people are at the heart of decision making
- Regardless of their identity or background, children and young people are not disadvantaged by inequalities or discrimination
- Children and young people and their families have a sense of belonging at school, in the community and wider society.

Three improvement areas have been identified in the Children’s Services Plan. These are areas that need the collective effort of partners to improve outcomes for children and young people and in particular to tackle inequalities. These are:

1. Improving children and young people’s mental health and emotional wellbeing
2. Improving life outcomes for looked after children and young people
3. Tackling the impact of low income on children and young people’s participation and achievement

The experiences and life chances of looked after children and care leavers are therefore a key priority for community planning partners in Stirling.

This Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2018 – 2020, and its supporting improvement plan builds on the principles of GIRFEC and reflects a wider national and local commitment to improve outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people and address inequity in attainment, health and income.

What is corporate parenting?

Scottish Government guidance defines corporate parenting as:

“An organisation’s performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and safeguard the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver, and through which physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted.”

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Who are corporate parents in Stirling?

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty of corporate parenting locally on:

• Stirling Council
• NHS Forth Valley
• Skills Development Scotland
• Police Scotland
• Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
• Forth Valley College
• Children’s Reporter
• Stirling University
What are the duties of corporate parents?

Corporate parenting is not a task which can be delegated to an individual or team. It means that the whole organisation is responsible for fulfilling corporate parenting duties. These duties are set out in Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

Implementation must be led by senior management across all departments, regardless of their focus or function. Staff at all levels must understand their duties, and be supported and enabled to fulfil them. As corporate parenting is a corporate responsibility, an organisation’s most senior corporate management will be held responsible for ensuring that the duties set out in Part 9 are met.

Corporate parents must:

- **Be alert** to matters which might adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and young people
- **Assess** the needs of looked after children and young people for their services and support
- **Help** looked after children and young people to make use of their services and support
- **Promote** the interests of looked after children and young people
- **Seek** to provide looked after children and young people with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing, and help young people to access them.
Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

The Act established a new legal framework within which services work together in support of children, young people and families. It introduced a number of important changes for looked after children and care leavers in Scotland and added to or amended previous statutes, rather than replacing them. In summary, the changes are:

- Every child and young person (up to their 18th birthday) will have **access to a named person as a single point of contact** (Part 4)
- Every looked after child and care leaver (up to their 18th birthday) will have a **Child’s Plan** (Part 5)
- **600 hours of free early learning and child care** for all **two year olds** who are ‘looked after’ or secured with friends or relatives through a Kinship Care Order (Part 6, sections 47 and 48)
- **Corporate parenting duties** for certain individuals and organisations (Part 9)
- Extended eligibility for **aftercare assistance** up to an **individual’s 26th birthday**; new duty on local authorities to **report on the death** of a young person in receipt of aftercare services (Part 10)
- ‘**Continuing Care**’, providing certain care leavers with the opportunity to **continue with the accommodation and assistance** they were provided with immediately before they ceased to be looked after (Part 11)
- **Support** for children at **risk of becoming looked after** (Part 12)
- **Assistance** for applicants and holders of a **Kinship Care Order** (Part 13)
- Use of **Scotland’s Adoption Register** made a **duty** for all adoption agencies (Part 14).
Outcomes for Care Experienced Young People – Scotland

Care experienced young people are eight times more likely to be excluded from school - Scottish Government, 2016

- 8%, or fewer than 1 in 12 looked after young people leave school with a Higher (SCQF 6) level qualification - Scottish Government, 2016
- Only 4% of care experienced young people leave school to go to University, compared to 39% of the general population - Scottish Government, 2016
- 73% of care experienced young people leave school before the age of 16, compared with 27% of all school leavers - Scottish Government, 2016

As of 2015, 33% of young people in prison and 31% of adult prisoners self-reported as having previously been in care. Anecdotal evidence from practitioners suggests the real figure may be considerably higher - Scottish Prison Service, 2016

68% of care experienced young people experience 3 or more placement moves - SCRA, 2012

Government statistics demonstrate that at least 21% of care leavers become homeless within five years. Given that this figure relies on self-declaration and counts only formal applications for housing, practitioners estimate that the figure may even be as high as 50%
Stirling’s
Looked after Children and Young People*

There were 245 looked after children in Stirling in July 2017.

The percentage of children who are looked after children in Stirling was 1.4% in July 2017. This is the same as the national rate.

In July 2017, Stirling’s looked after children lived:

- Approximately 61% at home or with relatives
- 23% in Foster Care
- 13% in residential care

Level 4 Literacy and Numeracy for looked after children leavers in 2016/17 was 55%; this has improved from 39% in 2013/14.

Level 5 Literacy and Numeracy for looked after children leavers in 2016/17 was 35%; this has improved from 17% in 2013/14.

Initial positive destinations for looked after children leavers 2016/17 is 80%; this has improved from 50% in 2013/14.

*Scottish Government statistics

†Approximate due to anonymity suppression of some values
How we will work

In carrying out their duties, corporate parents will work to a set of principles. These will influence practice and provide the basis for improvement actions in the strategy but they will also be shaped further through working with children and young people through the Champions Board.

As corporate parents, partners will:

• Work with children, young people and their families to reduce the risk of children and young people becoming looked after.

• Develop a better understanding of the issues that children and young people who experience care face, be willing to change and demonstrate how things will change.

• Build on the assets of young people and encourage children and young people who experience care to engage and participate.

• Develop relationship based practice and incorporate nurture principles as a universal approach.

• Clearly explain to children and young people what their rights are.

• Work with looked after children and young people to ensure partners are alert to any relevant issues and can identify and deliver support a young person needs.

• Act as advocates on behalf of care experienced young people.
Engaging with and listening to looked after children and young people

Scotland ratified the United Nations Convention of the Child (UNCRC) in 1991. The essential principles behind the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 illustrate Scotland’s commitment to children’s rights. The first two principles are key examples of this: ‘each child has a right to be treated as an individual; each child who can form a view on matters affecting him or her has the right to express those views if he or she so wishes’\(^6\). Part 1 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places new children’s rights duties on Scottish Ministers and public authorities. The (2014) Act requires public bodies to report every three years on the steps they have taken to secure better or further effect of UNCRC requirements under section 2 and schedule 1 of the Act.\(^7\)

It is widely recognised that listening to children’s views is just one part of this process. Laura Lundy\(^8\), in her exploration of Article 12, suggests that listening alone is not enough. She suggests that there are four interrelated elements: space, voice, audience and influence.\(^9\) This model highlights the interrelatedness of the UNCRC.

Some of our current work in listening to the views of children and young people

Corporate parents use a range of approaches to encourage and support participation, engagement and influence on improving services. In schools and nurseries, children and young people are encouraged to develop the skills required for active participation. Children and young people with additional support needs are supported by approaches that enable them to form and express their views.

Our approach working with looked after children and young people and care leavers is rights-based.\(^10\) Where views are given we seek to ensure that these are listened to and that feedback is given on actions taken.

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Care experienced children and young people’s views are heard both in the meetings which are personal to them and in the broader service environment. Independent advocacy is offered and provided for children and young people who request it. We work with children and young people in places they identify as safe; information and support are provided in line with the child’s wishes.

Our looked after children and young people have been involved in the ‘Re-imagining the City Centre’ project and in interviewing for new employees as well as in service development. We have in place clear mechanisms for hearing about the experiences of children looked after away from the family home, children in foster care and residential care and we are in the process of commissioning software to improve this. Our Reference Group of care experienced young people shares its views on services and forms the basis from which our Champions Board will develop.

**Stirling’s Champions Board**

Stirling’s Champions Board is a safe, inclusive, participatory environment where looked after children and care leavers’ views and experiences are heard by senior leaders and through their influence, positive action is taken. It is a place where young people can be open and honest about the issues affecting them and how they perceive the services for looked after children and care leavers in Stirling. This constructive dialogue between young people with experience of care and key members of the Council and partners, their corporate parents, provides a place where co-production can be supported and practice can be shaped to evoke positive change.

**The Champions Board will be based on the following principles:**

- Co-production
- A participatory forum where all voices are listened to and heard
- Feedback is important
- Mutual respect for all participants regardless of age
- Equalities-focused
- Stigma-free
- Transparent
- Able to create change.
Aims of the Champions Board

- To create a **meaningful dialogue** between care experienced young people and their corporate parents
- For this dialogue to **influence change** in policy and practice.

Objectives

- To provide a **forum** for the **views** of looked after/previously looked after young people.
- To support young people to **communicate their views and experiences** effectively to their corporate parents
- To enable corporate parents to **understand the views and needs** of looked after young people in Stirling
- For corporate parents to take **responsibility for facilitating change** within their service or agency to reflect the views and needs of looked after young people.

Outcomes

**The expected outcomes of the project are:**

- Stirling’s Champions Board is an effective method of **improving service provision** for Stirling’s looked after children and care leavers
- The views, needs and experiences of looked after children and care leavers are **communicated and listened to** within the Champions Board
- Stirling’s corporate parents have a **better understanding** of the experiences, views and needs of looked after young people and the issues affecting them
- **Increased self-esteem and confidence** for the young people involved
- Young people involved help **secure better outcomes** for themselves, other looked after children and care leavers and for future looked after children and care leavers.
To facilitate these aims, objectives and outcomes the Champions Board will comprise of the following groups:

- Champions Board
- Steering Group
- Support Group
- Young People’s Reference Group.

Supporting children and young people in their communities

Many community planning partnerships across Scotland are developing place-based approaches to service delivery and the move towards supporting children and young people who experience care, in their communities, is gaining momentum.

The Stirling approach to place-based working will enable more local planning and targeting of resources and localised solutions for children and young people. Supporting children and young people to remain in their local area preserves their sense of identity, protects the stability of key relationships and promotes a sense of belonging and inclusion. All of this is central to helping our children and young people achieve their true potential.

This means that we must strengthen our local resources, and services must develop models of strengthened integrated working that have at their centre the provision of intensive support, geared towards meeting individual need and persevering in the face of challenging circumstances. Our action plan sets out our improvement activities and new resources to support this way of working.
Wellbeing Outcomes in our Children’s Services Plan set out what we want to achieve for all children and young people in Stirling. The key wellbeing outcomes for our looked after children and young people are:

**Safe**
- Children and young people are protected from abuse, neglect or harm at home, at school and in the community
- Children and young people are risk aware and know how to stay safe

**Healthy**
- Children and young people are physically healthy
- Children and young people are mentally and emotionally healthy

**Achieving**
- The attainment gap relating to poverty, additional support needs and looked after children and young people is reduced

**Nurtured**
- Children and young people thrive as a result of nurturing stable environments and nurturing relationships
- Young people live in suitable housing, including young people leaving care

**Active**
- Children and young people are able to access and participate in play, physical activity and sport

**Respected & Responsible**
- Children and young people and their families are respected as equal partners in decision making and planning
- Children and young people understand their rights within the UNCRC, their responsibilities, and are confident in exercising them
- Children and young people are engaged positively and respected in their community

**Included**
- The views of children and young people are at the heart of decision making
- Regardless of their identity or background, children and young people are not disadvantaged by inequalities or discrimination
- Children and young people and their families have a sense of belonging at school, in the community and wider society
In seeking to deliver these outcomes for looked after children and young people and care leavers, partners as corporate parents, will focus their improvement activity around five themes:

1. Learning and achievement
2. Health and wellbeing
3. Strengthening local resources to support children and young people in their communities
4. Participation and engagement
5. Workforce development
**LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT:** Looked after children and young people will have a positive experience of education and be engaged through positive relationships; there will be a reduced gap between the attainment levels of looked after children and young people and their peers; more looked after children and young people will go on to learning, training and work when they leave school.

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<th>Area for improvement</th>
<th>Critical activities: by March 2020</th>
<th>Partners</th>
<th>Lead</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive post school destinations for looked after children and young people</td>
<td>Improve partners’ systems of tracking and monitoring of looked after children and young people to build a more seamless continuum of support during the young person’s journey</td>
<td>Stirling Council: Schools, Learning and Education; Children and Families – ASN and Wellbeing; Skills Development Scotland; Forth Valley College; University of Stirling; Forth Valley Developing Young Workforce</td>
<td>Kevin Kelman; Bryony Monaghan; Val Ormiston; Tracey Henderson</td>
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<td>Improve employer engagement to actively promote and support the training, development and recruitment of care experienced young people</td>
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<td>Improve access to and the quality of work experience opportunities, including Modern Apprenticeships</td>
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<td>Explore virtual head teacher models</td>
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<td>Develop guidance on school attendance</td>
<td>Stirling Council: Schools, Learning and Education; Children and Families – ASN and Wellbeing; SCRA</td>
<td>Sarah Anderson; Neil McKinley; Mark Howie</td>
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HEALTH AND WELLBEING: Looked after children and young people will be supported to develop resilience and self-esteem, leading to better mental wellbeing; children and young people will have access to the right support at the right time.

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<tr>
<td>Health needs assessments</td>
<td>A consistent approach to health needs assessments and completion of Child’s Plans</td>
<td>NHS Forth Valley</td>
<td>Shirley Clark Lesley Thomson</td>
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<td>Access to mental wellbeing services and clearer pathways</td>
<td>Mapping of services supporting looked after children and young people and analysis of need, including transition to adult services Develop guidance for looked after children and young people on improving mental health and wellbeing</td>
<td>NHS Forth Valley; Stirling Council Educational Psychology, Youth Services</td>
<td>Morven Graham Jacquie Sproule</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personalised support in education for every looked after child and young person</td>
<td>Identify a person as a first point of contact to support the wellbeing of children and young people in school or equivalent settings</td>
<td>Stirling Council: Schools, Learning and Education Youth Services; Educational Psychology</td>
<td>Sarah Anderson</td>
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**STRENGTHEN LOCAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES:** Local services will increasingly be able to support and enhance the wellbeing of looked after children and young people; wherever possible, children and young people will be supported in their local communities; services will have a focus on prevention and early intervention.

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<tr>
<td>Appropriate, safe and secure accommodation</td>
<td>Finalise out of area placement review</td>
<td>Stirling Council: Children and Families; Housing, Augmented Care and Support</td>
<td>Marie Valente</td>
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<td>Complete refurbishment of Brucefield</td>
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<td>Scope out accommodation needs for care leavers and plan resources to meet need</td>
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<td>Recruitment campaign for supported lodgings</td>
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<td>Family support</td>
<td>Implement functional family therapy</td>
<td>Stirling Council: Children and Families</td>
<td>Marie Valente</td>
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<td>Effective services secured via Includem</td>
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<td>Review Parent and Family Support Team support for kinship and foster carers</td>
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<td>Enhanced human resource capacity to support looked after children and young people</td>
<td>Increase recruitment of foster carers</td>
<td>Stirling Council: Children and Families</td>
<td>Marie Valente Angus Sneddon</td>
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<td>Appoint mentoring co-ordinator and establish mentoring service</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Recruitment of a therapist and family support worker for foster carers</td>
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<td>Isabel McKnight</td>
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<td>Permanence/ PACE</td>
<td>Review and implement tracking system</td>
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<td>Children's Hearings System</td>
<td>Progress the 'Better Hearings' agenda</td>
<td>SCRA; Stirling Council: Children and Families</td>
<td>Neil McInlay</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Support young people who are applying for and claiming Universal Credit</td>
<td>Stirling Council Money Advice Team; Social Services</td>
<td>Diane Connock</td>
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<td>Income maximisation and money advice</td>
<td>Improve procedures for recording, collating and using school data about looked after children and young people in SEEMiS</td>
<td>Stirling Council: Children and Families – ASN and Wellbeing</td>
<td>Bryony Monaghan</td>
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PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT: Looked after children and young people will be able to have a meaningful dialogue with their corporate parents; this dialogue will influence change in policy and practice.

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<tr>
<td>Ensure the views of looked after children and young people are heard and acted upon to influence policy and practice</td>
<td>Implement, monitor and evaluate the Champions Board and its supporting framework</td>
<td>Stirling Council: Children and Families – Children’s Rights Officer; Schools, Learning and Education; NHS Forth Valley; Reporter</td>
<td>Marie Valente</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enable looked after children and young people to easily share information with services</td>
<td>Introduce MOMO (or equivalent) electronic system</td>
<td>Stirling Council: Children and Families</td>
<td>Marie Valente Isabel McKnight</td>
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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: Corporate parents will have an increased awareness of the needs of looked after children and young people, how to assess their needs and an improved understanding of their corporate parenting duties.

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| Corporate parents are more confident and informed about their duties and more responsive to the needs of children and young people who experience care | Develop and implement a multiagency training and development framework to include:  
• Cross agency training  
• Increased awareness amongst partners of support offered by all agencies to care experienced young people | All Corporate Parents | Stirling Council Organisational Development |
| Provide training to staff and carers on relationships and resilience | Stirling Council: Educational Psychology Service | Morven Graham |
To enable corporate parents to measure the impact of their work, the following outcome indicators will be used:

- **Increased** number of children who are looked after away from the family home whose placements have been sustained, with no unplanned moves, within a 6 month period

- **Increased** % of looked after young people leaving school who **attain literacy and numeracy SCQF Level 4 or better**

- **Increased** % of looked after young people leaving school who **attain literacy and numeracy SCQF Level 5 or better**

- **Improved school attendance** of looked after children and young people

- **Reduced school exclusion rate** of looked after children and young people

- **Increased positive destinations** for looked after young people and care leavers

- **Reduced** number of children and young people who are **placed in accommodation outside their local area**

- 100% of looked after children and young people referred to **LAC Health Team receive a LAC Health Assessment**

- **Increased** % of looked after young people **sustaining tenancies for a year**

- **Reduced** number of care leavers who are placed in **homeless accommodation**

More detailed improvement measures will be developed to evaluate the impact of activities in the action plan. These will be developed in the context of improved analysis of evidence and data over the two year period of the strategy.
If you need help or this information supplied in an alternative format please call 01786 404040.