

CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY

2011 – 2014

DRAFT 3

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 National Context:

Children in the care of local authorities are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of children in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect. At any one time around 60,000 children are looked after in England (of whom some 59% are subject to care orders). Some 90,000 children are looked after at some point in any one year. *(DFE, 1 April 2011)*

Most looked after children are in foster care (73%), whilst some 10% are in children's homes and the remainder are cared for in a number of different settings including residential schools and placements with parents. *(DFE, 1 April 2011)*

The circumstances and experiences of looked after children and young people mean that they can experience many disadvantages and hence poorer outcomes than other children, across a range of measure including health and education.

The Government's White paper, *Care Matters: Time for Change* published in June 2007 sets out the steps to be taken by government in partnership with local government, the voluntary and private sector and the wider children's workforce to improve the outcomes for children and young people in care.

The revised legal framework for looked after children comes into force on 1 April 2011 and aims to support frontline staff in making professional judgements based on best practice and on a clear cycle of assessment, planning, intervention and review.

1.2 Local Context:

Here in Telford and Wrekin we currently have 270 children and young people in care as at 31 May 2011. This has steadily increased from 233 in 2008 to a peak in of 289 in December 2010. In May 2011 our children in care rate was 68.5 per 10,000 compared with the national average of 58 (as at the end of March 2010)

Of the 270 children in care 39 (14.4%) are from a BME background. Throughout 2010/2011 the largest age group of children in care is 10-15 years (currently accounting for 41.3% (112) of the total children in care population.

With respect to placements 13 Children have been placed for adoption as at the end of May 2011, 86.3% are cared for within a family setting, 33 (12.1%) are in residential placements and 3 (1.1%) live independently; 142 are placed in area whilst 129 are placed out of area. Placement stability is crucial to positive outcomes for children in care, In 2010/11 11.5% of Children in Care in Telford and Wrekin had 3 placements or more, although above the national average of 10.9% in 2009/10 it is improving on previous years outcomes.

Within Telford and Wrekin we know that in general terms outcomes for children and young people in care and care leavers have not kept pace with those of their peers:

- At Key Stage 2 five out of ten (50%) of young people reached level 4 in English and the same number reached level 4 in maths, this compares with 75% of all children sitting the tests, achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths (2010)
- At Key Stage 4 two out of twenty (10%) achieved 5 A*-GCSEs (or equivalent), compared to a figure of 55.9% for all young people who sat the exams (2010)
- 87.5% of care leavers aged 19 were living in suitable accommodation as judged by the council as at the end of March 2011, compared to the England average of 94% in 2009/10
- Ten out of twenty four (41.6%) former care leavers were not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) compared to a figure of 7.8% for all 16-18 year olds (2010/2011)

Given our corporate parenting responsibilities this picture of education outcomes in particular for children and young people in care and care leavers in Telford and Wrekin is not acceptable; this strategy provides the key mechanism for driving improvement.

1.3 Challenges faced by Children and Young People in Care

Placement Stability

Children in Care are more likely to experience poorer outcomes if their care needs are not matched to the right placement at both a strategic and individual level. Our aim is for all children in care to have placements that meet their social, health and educational needs and provide effective support to enable them to achieve their full potential. Our **Children in Care Placements Commissioning Strategy** is a partner document whose actions will be addressed/incorporated as part of the Corporate Parenting action plan; it sets out how we will match the requirements of children and young people in care with appropriate placements and resources to meet identified needs,

Educational Achievement

The Social Exclusion Unit's report A Better Education for Children in Care identified five key reasons why looked after children underachieve in education:

- their lives are characterised by instability
- they spend too much time out of school
- they do not have sufficient help with their education if they fall behind
- primary carers are not expected or equipped to provide sufficient support and encouragement for learning and development
- they have unmet emotional, mental and physical health needs that impact on their education

As such these issues have informed the action plan which will drive improved outcomes for our children in care

Children and young people missing from care

Many cases of missing children and young people involve children in care; particularly those resident in children's care homes operated primarily by private care providers. Here in Telford and Wrekin there were 389 episodes of missing children and young people; 59 absent from placements in Telford and

Wrekin and 111 from placements outside of Telford and Wrekin; the remainder were missing from home.

Although the majority of looked after children do not experience missing episodes, those who do can be forced to stay in environments that are harmful to their safety and well being and so end up engaging in activities that may put them at risk.

Our **Joint Protocol for reporting Missing Children and Young People** sets out how using partnership, problem solving and performance management we will continue to reduce repeat runaway behavior and safeguard some of our most vulnerable children.

Teenage Pregnancy

National research has shown that by the age of 20, one quarter of young people who had been in care were young parents and 40% were mothers; local data suggests that this is also a challenge for us here in Telford and Wrekin. Our action plan will ensure that children in care are properly targeted by health promotion specialists and other sexual health services which will be designed to reduce teenage pregnancy.

Emotional Health & Wellbeing

Evidence from some previous studies suggests that looked after children are nearly five times more likely to have a mental health disorder than all children. Individualised and comprehensive health assessments and health needs plans will ensure that children and young people are signposted to and quickly able to access relevant support and treatment services.

Youth Offending

A recent report by prison inspectors (May 2011) shows that one quarter of the 1,600 children held in young offenders' institutions (YOIs) in England and Wales have been in care. As a result of our Service Review of Adult and Children's Services our management teams in Safeguarding and Family and Community Services will become more integrated, taking joint responsibility to intervene early to prevent children in care going on to offend or to break the cycle of re-offending

2. OUR AMBITION

To secure the best possible outcomes for our children and young people in care so that as care leavers they have life chances and opportunities that are at least equal to those of their peers.

We will do this by providing good quality care and support whilst children and young people are in care coupled with appropriate continuity of contact to ensure gradual transition into independent living.

3. OUR ROLE AS CORPORATE PARENTS

Our responsibility in improving outcomes and actively promoting the life chances of children and young people that we look after has become known as corporate parenting, in recognition of the fact that the task must be shared by the whole local authority and partner agencies.

This corporate parenting role is shared on the behalf of the Local Authority by the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and the Lead Member (LM), who together take responsibility and accountability for the wellbeing and future outcomes of our children in care and care leavers.

3.1 Role of the DCS and Lead Member

Our Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out what we need to achieve in order to realise our ambitions for children and young people in care and care leavers. It is one of the key mechanisms by which the DCS will ensure that services:

- Support good parenting from every person involved in the child's life
- Are planned and provided to take account of children and young people's views so that they have a real say in the decisions that affect their future
- Provide children and young people with stability in their lives
- Raise the aspirations of looked after children by expecting the same of them as any parent would expect from their own children

(Statutory Guidance: The Roles and Responsibilities of the Lead member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services)

The strategy is owned by the Corporate Parenting Leadership Team, which is chaired by the DCS and made up of senior officers with responsibility for the corporate parenting of children in care. The LM is also as a member of this team, taking a political role in ensuring that the processes are in place for both the DCS and the LM to fulfil their duties and to be the best possible corporate parents for our children and young people in care and care leavers;

3.2 Governance Arrangements – See Appendix 1

The Corporate Parenting Strategy is owned at the highest level by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Executive. The Children's Trust Board (CTB) is accountable to the LSP Executive for ensuring that the partnership arrangements are in place to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people in care and care leavers.

The CTB is also committed to ensuring that the most vulnerable children and young people achieve more and are prepared for adult life. The CPLT is the subgroup responsible to the CTB for making this happen, for our children and young people in care and care leavers. It oversees and owns the implementation of the action plan which supports the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Strategy. In particular it ensures that there are good joint working relationships between council service delivery units and with partner agencies, holding them to account for the delivery of cost effective high quality services.

The CPLT will draw upon support and challenge from the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to ensure that the Corporate Parenting Strategy effectively safeguards and promotes the welfare of our children in care.

To ensure that council services and councillors alike are committed to fulfilling their corporate parenting responsibilities the Corporate Parenting Leadership Team reports through to the Corporate Management Team which is chaired by the Chief Executive of the Council. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee holds two committees per annum focussed on Corporate Parenting plus

two to meet with children in care and care leavers in person – the format of which is being developed by the care Council.

One of our key actions will be to re-visit the delivery arrangements within the governance structure to ensure that it is fit for purpose; there should be no duplication and we intend that sub groups are integrating to take a holistic approach to improving outcomes. Governance arrangements in relation to the Health and Wellbeing Board are evolving.

3.3 Voice of the child and young person

Our Care Council 4 You (CC4u) ensures that children and young people have the opportunity to voice their opinions and share their experiences with those responsible for Corporate Parenting. It acts as a voice for all children and young people in care and influences policy and decisions at the highest level.

In developing the Corporate Parenting Strategy we have taken account of what our children in care consider a good corporate parent should be, someone who:

- Treats you with respect
- Listens to you and takes your opinions seriously
- Treats you as an individual
- Is always truthful with you and won't make promises that can't be kept

These characteristics are included in the Telford and Wrekin Pledge (see Appendix 2) which is a set of promises that the council has made to our children and young people in care. The Telford and Wrekin Pledge forms a high profile aspect of this strategy and is monitored at statutory reviews of core plans using a format designed by CC4U.

As part of the monitoring and evaluation process that supports the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Strategy we will work with the Care Council to ensure that children and young people in care have the opportunity to discuss and give feedback on the quality of services they receive. The evaluation of how well we have implemented the Telford and Wrekin Pledge will form a key aspect of this process.

Our Participation Worker, works with our Care Council to enable children and young people in care to share their experiences, express their views and shape future services in a way that reflects their needs and their hopes for the future and is therefore a key member of the Corporate Parenting Leadership Team.

4. OUR OBJECTIVES – WHAT WE NEED TO ACHIEVE

We have structured our strategy around achieving the Every Child matters (ECM) outcomes whilst using the DFE revised legal framework to ensure that we have considered all aspects of a child or young person's journey through care.

Below we have described what we see as the key elements of each outcome; based on what we know about our children in care we have then identified what we need to achieve, which will become the objectives for our supporting action plan.

The named guidance and regulations highlighted in italics are embedded within service planning of both the council and its partner agencies to ensure high quality care for all of our children and young people in care.

4.1 Being Healthy

To promote the physical and emotional wellbeing of children in care by supporting healthy lifestyles and secure attachments and friendships. We also want to enable children and young people in care to take part in positive out of school activities whilst reducing risk taking behaviour.

- Provide timely and effective health services which recognise the very special requirements of many children and young people in care
- Identify and meet the emotional and mental health needs of children in care and care leavers
- Minimise risk taking behaviour (substance and alcohol misuse, smoking, unsafe sex and teenage pregnancy) and provide support and treatment where required

Statutory Guidance on promoting the health and well being of looked after children (November 2009)

4.2 Staying Safe

To protect children and young people in care from harm and ill treatment, giving them the opportunity to grow up feeling safe, cared for and secure. Delivered through the Children in Care Placements Commissioning Strategy and Sufficiency Duty 2010-2013

- Ensure a strategic approach to the development of care placements to reflect the changing needs of children in care. (Strategic Development)
- Keep children with families where it is safe and sensible to do so thereby reducing the number of children coming into care (Prevention and re-habilitation)
- Implement the Sufficient Duty to meet the placement needs of children in care and on the edge care (Sufficiency Duty)

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (March 2010)

4.3 Enjoy and Achieve

To promote our children and young people's educational aspirations and support their achievements. This will include enabling them to participate in a wide range of enjoyable activities both in and out of school so that they can become active learners and therefore achieve their full potential

- Enable all children and young people in care to achieve educational outcomes comparable to their peers at every age.
- Engage children and young people in care in a range of sporting, cultural and leisure activities

Promoting the Educational Attainment of Looked after Children :Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (March 2010)

4.4 Positive Contribution

To provide opportunities for us to listen and respond to the views and ideas of children in care and to ensure that they are involved in decision making. We also want to promote positive behaviour, being involved in the community and engaging in offending behaviour

- Ensure that children and young people in care have a voice in relation to their opinions of their own care and their views are included in wider service planning, delivery , evaluation and policy
- Ensure that children and young people in care can access wider participation opportunities, to develop self confidence, life skills and to contribute to the wider community
- Prevent offending and reduce re-offending by children and young people in care and care leavers

*Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) handbook
Roles and Responsibilities of lead Members and Directors of Children's Services
Providing Effective Advocacy Services for Children and Young People making a complaint under the Children Act 1989*

4.5 Economic Well being

We want to develop a culture of enterprise in which children and young people in care are motivated to move on to further education, training and employment supported whilst also been supported during their transition to independent living

- Support care leavers to progress their careers in continued education, employment and training
- Ensure care leavers are equipped to achieve independence particularly in the provision of long term accommodation

*Statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children March 2010
The Children's Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning transition to adulthood for care leavers (October 2010)*

5. OUR ACTION PLAN – HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE IMPROVED OUTCOMES

The supporting action plan sets out how we will achieve our shared ambitions, detailing our objectives, actions, timescales and the identified lead officer.

Appendix 3 details the measures that we will use to assess the progress that is being made. We have high expectations for our children and young people in care and these are reflected in the challenging targets that we have set ourselves.

6. REFERENCES

Care Matters: Time for Change, June 2007

www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publications (Accessed 6 June 2011)

DFE Website www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childrenincare (Accessed 27 May 2011)

How do you know you are a good corporate parent: Improvement and Development Agency

www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page/page.do?pagelid=8330120 (Accessed 19 May 2011)

Inspections of safeguarding and looked after children's services – Framework for inspection and guidance for local authorities and partners

www.ofsted.gov.uk (Accessed 27 May 2011)

Statutory Guidance: The Roles and Responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services

www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childrenincare (Accessed 6 June 2011)

The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (2008/09)

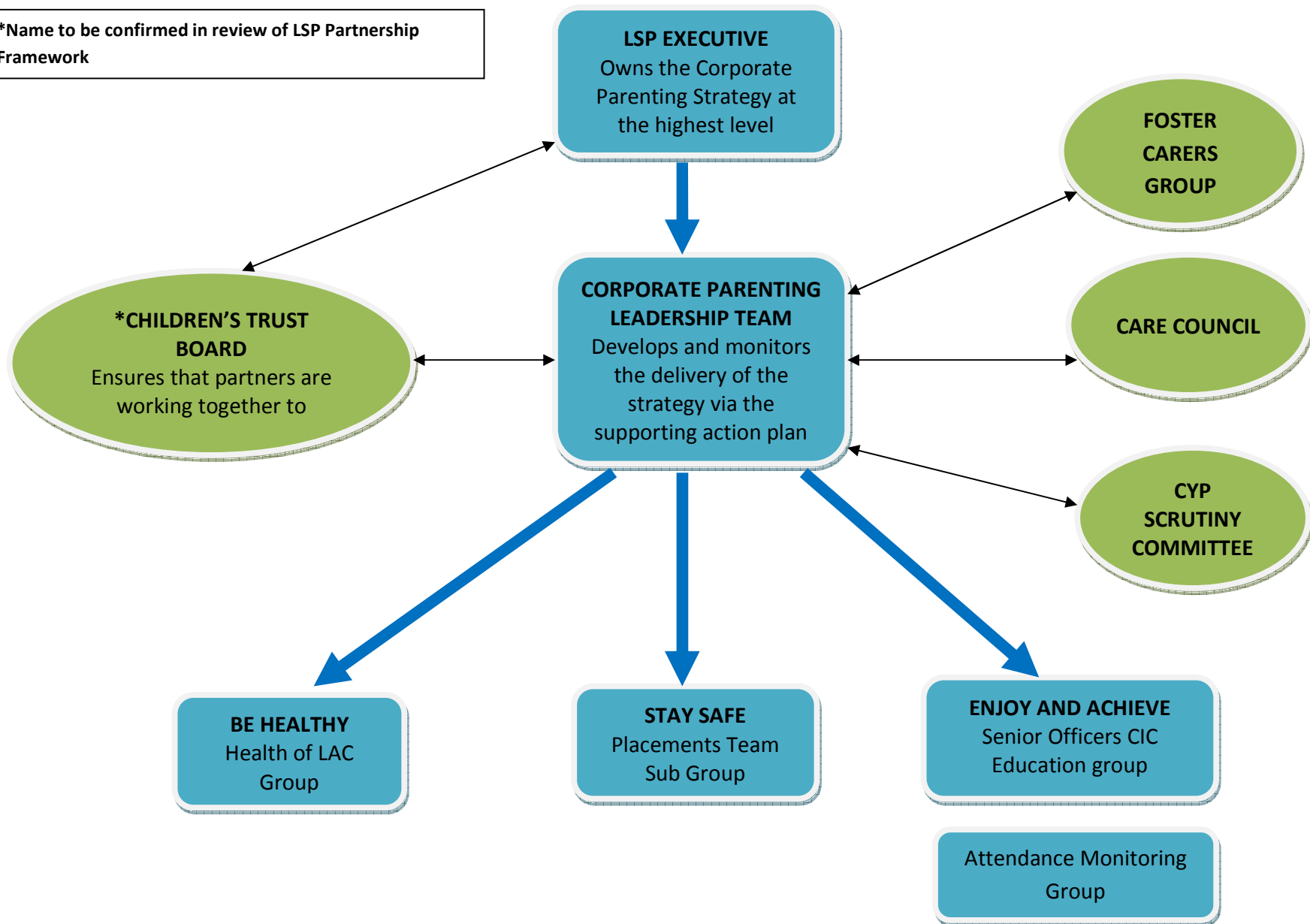
SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP 2011 – 2014)

Children in Care Placements – Commissioning Strategy and Sufficiency Duty 2010-2013

Joint Protocol for reporting Missing Children and Young People

*Name to be confirmed in review of LSP Partnership Framework



Telford and Wrekin Corporate Parents - Our pledge to children and young people in care and care leavers

Values

We Will:

1. Treat you with respect, you should also treat us with respect
2. Listen to you and take your opinions seriously
3. Treat you as individuals
4. Always be truthful with you and won't make promises that we can't keep

Keeping Safe

We Will:

5. Give you fair boundaries and help you to understand why they are there
6. Make sure that you have a good carer, who is loving, caring, kind and safe and makes sure that you are included in all activities such as holidays
7. Help you learn from mistakes and provide you with second chances and give you sound guidance and role models
8. Make sure that you have your own room, possessions and personal space

Being Healthy

We Will:

9. Make sure that you have healthy balanced meals and you can access healthy activities
10. Make sure you have information that will allow you to make healthy choices
11. Make sure that at medicals you understand what is going to happen and what is expected of you
12. Support you to access different health services when you need to

Becoming Independent

We Will:

13. Help you to gain the skills and have the confidence to look after yourself and support you with independence when the time is right for you
14. Talk to you before your 16th birthday, about your options. We will support you to leave care at your pace before your 18th birthday, with a support package that meets your individual needs
15. Support you to make informed choices about your education, particularly with your options for GCSEs and your future career path
16. Make sure that you have your personal documents such as birth certificates and passports before you are 16

Enjoy and Achieve

We Will:

17. Make sure that you have a place at a good school or nursery and if you get behind in education that you can access extra tuition if you would like to
18. Encourage you to try new hobbies and experiences and continue things that you are good at
19. Make sure that you have access to a computer and internet to support your schooling (if appropriate)
20. Celebrate your birthday, special occasions and achievements with you

Make a Positive Contribution

We Will:

21. Make sure that you can access good quality information about being in care and help you to understand decisions that are made about you and who makes those decisions
22. Keep you informed of all changes that affect you and include your views and opinions on how services are shaped
23. Make sure that you are consulted about when, where and who you would like to attend your meetings, and that at your meetings you are listened to
24. Tell you when you have done something well, particularly in your reviews

Contact

We Will:

25. Make every effort to give you contact which is regular and of good quality, unless it is not reasonably practical or unsafe for you to do so
26. Make sure that you have opportunities to get to know, and when needed, say goodbye to, family friends and adults that are working with you
27. Try and make sure that we don't change your social worker or reviewing officer, unless it is unavoidable or you transfer to a different social work team
28. Make sure that your social worker spends quality time with you and doesn't just see you at meetings



Appendix 3

A summary of the performance information that we will use to judge whether we have improved outcomes

Being Healthy	Under 18 conception rate
	Substance and alcohol misuse
	Emotional and behavioral health of looked after children
Staying Safe	Stability of placements – number of moves
	Stability of placement – length of placement
Enjoy and Achieve	Looked after children reaching level 4 in maths at KS2
	Looked after children reaching level 4 in English at KS2
	Looked after children achieving 5A*-C GCS's or equivalent at KS4 including English and maths
	Looked after Children attendance at school
Positive Contribution	Communicating views at LAC Reviews
	FTE and re-offending rates
Economic Wellbeing	Percentage of care leavers at 19 in suitable accommodation
	Care Leavers in education, employment or training
Cross Cutting	Continuity of Social Worker

Appendix 4

Who does what for Children in Care and Care Leavers in Telford and Wrekin – **update following restructures**

Education Support Service	
Leisure and Fun Project	
LAC Nurse	
Therapy and Lifestyle Worker	
16 + team	
Leaving Care Youth Worker	
Review and Care Core Group	
Safeguarding Advisory Service	
Assessment and Case Management Teams	
Family Placements team	
Complaints	
Rights and Representation	
Independent Vision project	
Helpdesk	