

REPORT TO: Children Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 28 October 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Children & Enterprise

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People and Families

SUBJECT: Pledge to Children in Care

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To present the revised Pledge to Children in Care and to seek approval of it.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION That PPB:

- i) Endorse the Pledge
- ii) Endorse action to promote the Pledge so it known to the Council, Children's Trust and other partners.
- iii) Identify actions to support the commitments to Children in Care.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Government's Green Paper "Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Young People in Care" and the subsequent White Paper "Care Matters: Time for Change" identified steps that needed to be taken to improve outcomes for children and young people in care.

3.2 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 then set out the reforms that were needed to transform the life chances of children in care. The Act strengthened the statutory framework around the care system to enable children and young people to receive high quality care and support, and drive improvements in the delivery of services focussed on the needs of the child.

3.3 One of the key aims of these developments was to improve the role of the corporate parent, as part of children's trusts. It is with the corporate parent that responsibility and accountability for the wellbeing and future prospects of children in care and care leavers ultimately rest.

- 3.4 A good corporate parent must offer everything that a good parent would, including stability. It must address both the difficulties which children in care experience and the challenges of parenting within a complex system of different services. This means that children in care and care leavers should be cared about, not just cared for, and that all aspects of their development should be nurtured requiring a corporate approach across all of the agencies involved in the Children's Trust.
- 3.5 The corporate parents are the officers and Members of the Council, members of the Children's Trust, and other partner agencies.
- 3.6 It is equally important that children have a chance to shape and influence the parenting they receive.
- 3.7 In order to improve the role of the corporate parent the Government announced their expectation that:-
- i. every local authority should put in place arrangements for a Children in Care Council, with direct links to the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member. This would give children in care and care leavers a forum to express their views and influence the services and support they receive
 - ii. every local area should set out its 'Pledge' to children in care and care leavers covering the services and support that they should expect to receive
 - iii. the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services should be responsible for leading improvements in corporate parenting
- 3.8 Halton established its Children in Care Council in December 2007. Work on the Pledge commenced in October 2008 and concluded with the young people accepting the final version at their meeting in May 2009. This was endorsed by Executive Board in July 2009.
- 3.9 The Pledge was reviewed with children in care and care leavers between February and July 2013. Whilst the Children in Care Council was central to the consultation, questionnaires were also sent to all children in care aged over 7 years, 1:1 consultations were offered and young people were invited to attend their Council meetings.
- 3.10 The young people felt that much of the previous Pledge remained relevant but that they would prefer to see the commitments presented in a fuller and more self-explanatory way. The result of their work is presented in draft form at Appendix 1 and represents the 12 key things that children in care and care leavers say are key to improving outcomes for them. The Pledge has been endorsed by Full Council on 16th October and is supported by the Care Leavers Charter (Appendix 2) which has also recently been endorsed by

Executive Board.

- 3.11 Officers, Members, The Children's Trust and other partners all need to contribute in order to achieve the commitment contained within the Pledge.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Pledge is consistent with national policy, the Care Matters agenda, Halton's multi-agency strategy for Children in Care and legislation.

5.0 **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Pledge is consistent with the Council's responsibility as a Corporate Parent.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The Pledge is consistent with ensuring the best possible outcomes for children in care and care leavers and in promoting their life chances.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Improving outcomes for children in care and care leavers and ensuring that they receive the appropriate education and are supported to find employment are essential to their long term economic prospects.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Improved outcomes will contribute to the emotional and physical well being of children in care and care leavers.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Improving outcomes and raising the aspirations and achievements of children in care and care leavers will contribute to constructive and long term options for them.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

Improved outcomes for children in care and care leavers will enhance their own and the borough' economic environment.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 There are no significant risks associated with the Pledge.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Improving the life chances of children in care and care leavers through ensuring that they receive the services and support they require, will contribute to meeting the needs of this vulnerable group.

9.0 **REASON (S) FOR DECISION**

9.1 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 strengthened the role of the corporate parent. The Government requires every local area to set out its 'Pledge' to children in care and care leavers covering the services and support that they should expect to receive.

10.0 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

10.1 There is no prescribed format for a Pledge to children in care and care leavers. Halton's 'Pledge' has been designed and reviewed by the Children in Care Council and care leavers and therefore it is the one they would like the Executive Board to endorse.

11.0 **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

11.1 Immediately

12.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Children in Care Strategy	Rutland House	Christine Taylor
Children & Young Person's Act 2008	DCSF Website	Christine Taylor