

East Lothian Partnership

CORPORATE PARENTING PLAN

2024-27



**#Keep
The
Promise**



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Introduction

Welcome to East Lothian's Corporate Parenting Plan. Our plan sets out our shared vision, aspirations and ambitions for children and young people who are looked after, care experienced and care leavers.

A corporate parent is an organisation or individual who has special responsibilities for looked after children and care-experienced young people. Corporate parenting responsibilities extend to all looked after children, aged from birth to when they cease to be looked after, and as a care leaver. Corporate parents should do as much as they can to make sure children and young people feel in control of their lives and able to overcome the barriers they face. We want to work in partnership with young people to ensure that all care experienced children and young people have the same access and opportunities as other children and young people.

This Plan has been developed in partnership with children, young people and their families. Their voice has shaped what is important to them on the plan, which has then been translated into actions by partners.

Our Corporate Parenting Responsibilities for Looked After Children and Care Leavers



Scottish Government (2018)

Production of this plan is a statutory responsibility, but more than that will give the opportunity to stop and listen to our care experienced population. We want this plan to be a partnership between these groups, both challenging and changing practice in a constructive and safe way for all. We need to acknowledge that change may feel uncomfortable but is necessary to improve lives and outcomes.

East Lothian’s Care Experienced Population

Despite being a small Local Authority, we are seeing a growing population. East Lothian was the fastest growing in Scotland, rising 24.6% in the last 20 years to 112,300 (Census, 2022). East Lothian also has the 6th highest proportion of 0-14 years old in Scotland. These increases bring great talent to East Lothian but also provide new challenges.

As our work has continued, we have seen falling numbers of children and young people Looked After away from home. However our number of children and young people Looked After at Home under statutory measures has increased. There has been greater focus upon the supports that these children and young people need to remain at home where safe to do so. This has challenged corporate parents to better understand and tolerate risk to create more child focused plans for care experienced children and young people. This has incorporated the actions of all of East Lothian’s Corporate Parents.

Data	Latest Figures (31 July 2023)	Notes
Total number of Looked After Children	199	
Number in residential care	32	
Number in foster care	68	
Number in kinship care	41	
Number of Looked After at Home	58	
Number in secure care	0	
Number of care leavers (16-26 years old)	133	Eligible for aftercare (not including continuing care)
Number of young people in continuing care	24	
Number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and young people	12	

Since the publication of The Promise in 2020, we have been working hard to realise the ambition of the Promise. This plan has incorporated the foundations of this – voice, care, people, family, and scaffolding.

What have we achieved so far?

Our Previous Plan

Health and Wellbeing

The Single Point of Access Service for mental health has continued to offer support to young people who are in need of support with their health and wellbeing. The numbers have grown, both as the service as developed, but also as nationally, as we are aware need is rising.

The SEE survey is completed by schools annually with certain year groups to understand need and gather feedback from pupils. The SEE survey for 2022-23 for P6, S2 and S4 show 79% of pupils having a staged assessment meeting felt they received good support either from in school or those outside school. These meetings are an early intervention when things can start to get difficult for children. All three of these age groups, saw an increase in their reported health and respected SHANARRI indicators, as measured through the SEE survey.

Whilst this addressed the need with school age children and young people, it was clear that there was a need for older young people to receive support. Through a short term forum 9 young people were offered small grants to allow them to access supports to improve their mental wellbeing. This ensured that they took control of what they felt would make them feel better. For example some wanted direct therapeutic intervention and for others it was about the impact of sport on your wellbeing, and the equipment to make that happen. This group helped join up services for care experienced young people, allowing more options for support.

We recognised that being trauma informed is vital and have employed a Person-Centred Trauma Project worker to co-ordinate this approach. The next three years should see this embedded within all corporate parenting areas.

The last 3 years has seen a change in the services provide to young carers. A new service was developed, supporting 194 children and young people in 2022, 179 in 2023. When consulting for the new plan, this area has proved vocal in shaping and guiding that plan.

Keeping Loved Ones Together

The numbers of Looked after children and young people has fallen from 227 in April 2021 to 182 in March 2023. This is a consequence of the implementation of the Promise – ensuring children and young people remain at home where it is safe to do so and scaffolding these children as much as possible. We have continued to promote families finding solutions within their own networks at difficult times and continue to promote Family Group Decision Making (FGDM). 108 families in 2021-22 were involved in this and 80 families the following year (2022-23).

A newly designed Family Support Service as part of Children's Social Work was formed. Combined with the external funding received for Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (Families Together East Lothian), there will be real alternatives for families needing the additional support at different levels. The development of these will continue over the next 3 years.

Unfortunately, our numbers of foster carers has continued to fall, with just under 50 fostering households in April 2023. This is indicative of the landscape across Scotland, with recruitment being particularly tricky. Despite this we have an increasing number of young people remaining in their placement (continuing care) post 18. This has risen from 4 in 2020, to 13 in 2023. Whilst this places

challenges on children needing placements, it highlights a successful transition for many young people into adulthood.

Our number of kinship carers dropped in 2021, however has remain steady since then, with a steady 4-5 young people remaining in their kinship placement post 18. This will set these young people up for life with consistent family links into adulthood. All kinship carers are offered support from Children 1st, with an expansion of support groups and activities. This has created both a formal and informal network. From April 2000, 114 carers with 113 children have been supported through this service. Over the last 3 years, there has been 1 disruption, which is a testament to the support offered.

There remains challenges around the ability to keep siblings together. We have a reduction in the number of sibling group in foster care, which may be due to the implementation of The Promise – with children remaining at home and together (the sibling bond being considered within the assessment as an important element for children). We have seen some inspiring practice where we have looked at carers coming to a family's home for a parental hospital stay rather than the trauma of disabled children leaving their family home, both keeping siblings together but also in their own environment, vital for their sensory needs.

Housing and Accommodation

Housing remains a challenge. As the population of East Lothian grows, so does the demand for good quality housing options. Development areas to try and address this will be reflected within the next plan.

Our TAC Housing and Support Panel has developed to assist young people to find the most appropriate supported accommodation. The Panel continue to meet monthly and has been creative within their approach to young people, increasing opportunities for relationship-based work to be undertaken prior to accommodation moves and where possible allow that transition to young people's safe permanent accommodation. Numbers have risen with need, with this forum also allowing partners to discuss supports for young people in a creative manner with relationships and the continuity of such at the fore. The first half of 2023 has seen 14 young people being discussed with supported accommodation needed for all, but that process of ensuring tenancy readiness being started earlier. There are currently 9 spaces in support accommodation ring-fenced for care leavers, with an additional 20 shared spaces between Housing and Care leavers (although some of those housing young people, may be care experienced). We have developed a more flexible support services for housing support which has supported a number of care leavers.

The new plan will continue to address the needs of this cohort, working directly with young people to identify factors needed to make housing options a success. The Plan will reflect that being a good neighbour starts early, and thus so should the learning around relationships and skills.

Education and Training

We aspire to have all children and young people living and learning in East Lothian. To make that aspiration a reality, we completed a redesign of Children's Social Work Services focusing upon the principles of the Promise and recognising the importance of timely person-centred intervention. This also coincided with the implementation of the Promise, changing culture and practice and working

alongside families. The number of children and young people in external residential provisions falling from 28 in April 2021 to 25 in April 2023 and the numbers in external fostering falling from 18 in April 2021 to 14 in April 2023. Whilst change has been slow, many of these plans need to progress at the pace of the child and allow services to develop local bespoke resources for some of these children and young people.

As well as reducing numbers overall, these numbers reflect a reduction in those children being accommodated as well as children returning. These numbers don't illustrate what it actually feels like for the children and their families at the centre of this – we have listened to young people who tell us they want to be at home, and what they need to make that happen. With many children we have been able to act upon that.

However, when we have tried to divert families to more appropriate supports, Covid and the cost-of-living crisis has seen the number of referrals to social work rise, rather than fall, from 957 in April – June 2021 to 1061 in Jan – March 2023.

Education's Scottish Attainment Challenge Fund has a national focus on addressing literacy and numeracy across school age children. To support that aim with care experienced children we have funded an Education Support Officer. This role supports environments where care experienced learners will feel more settled, motivated, and resilient to ensure a better experience at school. This, in turn, will help to improve attendance, educational outcomes, and contribute to better life chances. The next 3 years will see the development of this work.

Since 2021, numbers of CEYP at Edinburgh College have fluctuated from 125 in 2021, 194 in 2022 and 89 in 2023. However there has been a focus upon the support provided to young people through college with a Corporate Parenting training module mandatory for all staff, priority to CEYP for the Discretionary Fund, fast tracking of their bursary payment and not suspending bursary payments. The work has been underpinned with a focus upon the right support at the right time. Recognising that college is not for you at this time, can be hard but through great relationships with social work teams and residential units, it can be a positive choice with the door being let open. This work continues.

Next year will see us follow the progress of the NHS who have identified career pathways for care experienced young people, recognising the barriers and challenges that they face.

Rights and Participation

Work has been underway around the Local Authority's response to the implementation of the UNCRC. The Local Authority has been working to ensure that systems, policies and processes are aligned to the UNCRC and ensuring that all Council corporate parents are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Our new Children's Strategic Partnership Plan has a priority around Children's Rights and we are now working to ensure that we broaden the work of the group to ensure it is a partnership approach.

The numbers of children and young people who have been referred to Young Carers as a support has risen drastically. These young people have completed Viewpoint, which allows us to gather and better understand the voice of these children.

We have developed forums to include voice as a method of feedback but also to shape our services, for example East Lothian's Tenant's and Residents Panel (ELTRP), the Youth Strategy developed by Connected Communities' in partnership with others.

In the last 3 years we have developed our practice with children, young people and their families. Participation workers have been part of the new Families Together East Lothian Service, with their focus being on engagement and using this to build and develop the service. We have seen our language develop and change over the last 3 years – moving towards family time and looked after children. We are on a journey around that.

How was this plan shaped?

This plan has been developed with voice throughout, and shares the ambition of the Children's Strategic Partnership –

Making sure East Lothian's babies, children and young people are Happy, Healthy and Heard

The Champs Board have been through a period of change and have developed updated priorities. The plan reflects these –

- Belonging and Connection
- Health
- Culture
- Development
- Independent Living

These priorities have shaped the building of this plan, provided focus, and consistently brought actions back to the voice our services are there to support.

East Lothian Council has taken a comprehensive approach in developing its corporate parenting plan, ensuring that it reflects the lived experiences of children, young people, care-experienced parents, and the workforce. Recognising the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives, the council has worked diligently to create a plan that truly addresses the needs and aspirations of those involved.

To begin with, the council has actively engaged with children and young people who have experienced care, seeking their input and feedback on the plan. This involvement has been achieved through the East Lothian Champions Board, including workforce consultation events, and targeted focus groups. By directly involving care-experienced individuals, the council has gained valuable insights and first-hand experiences, ensuring that their voices are heard and their views are considered when shaping the corporate parenting plan.

East Lothian Council has also recognised the significance of including care-experienced parents in the development process. By engaging with care-experienced parents, the council has been able to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges they face and the support they require. This involvement has allowed for the creation of a plan that not only addresses the needs of children and young

people in care but also considers the needs of care-experienced parents, ultimately promoting stronger family dynamics and support structures.

Additionally, Recognising the pivotal role that corporate parents play in delivering services and support to care-experienced individuals, the council has sought their input and experiences. By engaging the workforce, the council has been able to understand the challenges they face in their roles, identify areas for improvement, and develop strategies to enhance the support provided to care-experienced children and young people.

Four Engagement sessions were held with professionals in Spring 2023 around the themes identified by the Champs. Attendees included health (public health, school nursing/ LAC nurses), active schools, further education, Connected communities and housing. There was also individual engagement with other key partners, including Police Scotland, Families Together East Lothian, The Promise Lead, Education and Edinburgh College.

Regular meetings with Who Cares? Scotland, which has allowed the Champs Board to shape this plan. However due to staffing changes that might have reduced consistency. Voice has also been sought from a wider group. A questionnaire was produced and provided to partners. As workers who know and engage with our children, they were the best people to ensure young people and families could help them have a voice. The themes within the questionnaire focused around being Happy, Healthy and Heard, something we want for all our children and young people. We had 11 responses. An engagement session was also carried out with care experienced parents.

This plan has been influenced and shaped by the following policy drivers.

- The Promise
- UNCRC

Through engagement, we heard some young people's stories -

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Our Corporate Parenting Plan 2024-2027

<p>Keeping Families Together Children must stay with their families wherever it is safe to do so, and families must receive all the support needed to ensure this is a reality for most.</p>
<p>Good childhood Making sure children who cannot live with their family have all they need to thrive 'Where living with their family is not possible, children must stay with their brothers and sisters where safe to do so and belong to a loving home, staying there for as long as needed'.</p>
<p>Moving on Making sure that young people have all that they need to transition into adulthood seamlessly.</p>
<p>Increasing opportunities Increasing opportunities: ensuring education (in its broadest sense) has the right support to ensure children feel engaged and included in learning/ development</p>

VOICE	OUTCOME	ACTIONS	Lead	MEASURE
We want to stay with our families and friends	Children and young people will remain within their families and home communities, where safe to do so.	<p>Strong and compassionate leadership</p> <p>Continue the development of the Families Together East Lothian (Whole Family Support Wellbeing)</p> <p>Increasing use of FGDM to keep families together.</p>	Lindsey Byrne, Head of Children's Services/ Nicola MacDowell, Head of Education	<p>Number prevented from coming into care.</p> <p>Numbers returning from external placements.</p> <p>Numbers engaged in family support.</p> <p>Number of FGDM</p>

		<p>Embed the Signs of Safety approach across all services.</p> <p>Support to kinship carers will increase, and number of kinship carers rise.</p> <p>Continue to prevent young people leaving East Lothian to live or learn, and when they do, have clear supportive plans for them to return to East Lothian.</p>		<p>Numbers of kinship carers</p> <p>Numbers engaging with kinship support.</p> <p>Numbers engaging with Families Together East Lothian</p>
Our family are important to us	Children and young people will have strong, supporting, and nurturing family relationships	Ensure that, when it is safe to do, brothers and sisters live together. Where that is not possible, time with their brothers and sisters will be part of the plan.		<p>Number of family groups prevented from coming into care.</p> <p>Number of brothers and sisters placed together in placement.</p> <p>Number of together and apart assessments and the outcomes (together/ apart/ other)</p>
We need adults to understand us and how situations can make us feel	Adults around children will understand trauma and the impact on children. Adults will practice in a trauma informed manner.	<p>Increase the number of workers having assessments of their awareness of being trauma informed.</p> <p>Increase the numbers of workers trained in trauma awareness practices.</p> <p>Increase the numbers of people completing the Learn-Pro Module – Trauma Informed Practice.</p>	Sarah Sutherland, Person Centred/ Trauma Project Worker	<p>Number of workers having assessments of their awareness of being trauma informed.</p> <p>Number of workers trained in trauma awareness.</p> <p>Numbers of people completing the Learn-Pro</p>

		All parts of the council will have a children's rights impact assessment.		Module – Trauma Informed Practice
We want opportunities to be active and try different activities	Children and young people will have the opportunity to be active and take part in activities.	Active Business Units will continue to work to identify and remove barriers to allow children/ young people to participate in sport. Increase the numbers of children/ young people engaged with Arts Services/ Trumberbone.		Numbers engaging with Active Business Units Numbers of children engaged with Trumberbone.
We want somewhere suitable to call home and feel safe there. We want a central information hub.	Children and young people will live in safe and secure housing. The gap between residential to supported accommodation will be bridged. Increased confidence in their skills for independent living for young people in supported accommodation/ their own tenancy.	Review of supported accommodation provision in East Lothian. A supported flat near the new residential children's home will provide a gradual steppingstone to independent living. Development of a young person's Housing Pathway which will encompass all young people who find themselves at risk of homelessness. All young people will receive appropriate housing, support, and advice. A web-based hub will be co-produced with young people.		Numbers of young people in B & B/ Number of 72-hour crisis meetings for those entering B & B. All accommodation procurement contracts will reflect the Promise and UNCRC. Number of young people's voice will help shape the work.
People will understand how important my family are to me	Young carers will be supported to care for a family member.	Young carer using services will be well supported, feel safe and happy.		Numbers of young carers referred to the Young Carers service.

				Number of young carers participating in activities.
Least restrictive practices should be used	Young people in conflict with the law, will be supported to make positive changes.	<p>Multiagency alternatives to secure will be sought and utilised (where appropriate) for young people finding themselves at risk of harm.</p> <p>Our response to young people in conflict with the law will be rights based.</p> <p>The principles of contextual safeguarding will inform our work. Multi-agency forums (TACG) will identify the spaces and places that our children and young people move in and endeavour to keep them safe.</p> <p>Multi-agency individual care plans will wrap support around young people at risk of leaving East Lothian.</p> <p>Development of Promise materials for Police Scotland to raise awareness.</p>	Emma Clater, Service Manager (Children's Services)/ Alan King (Police Scotland)	<p>Number of young people using secure care.</p> <p>Number of young people accessing the Intensive Support Service (Action for Children).</p> <p>Numbers of young people's voices shaping the YJ service.</p> <p>Numbers of CARM meetings/ Number of VYP's.</p> <p>Number of young people supported by Action for Children's Intensive Support service.</p>
Care experience is life long and we need support to move into adulthood	Young people will thrive when they leave care, and be supported through known relationships	<p>Development of a multi-agency aftercare service</p> <p>Develop a method of receiving Care experienced parents voice</p>	Emma Clater (Service Manager, Children's Services)	Number of young people that contribute to the development of the service design.
We want to be listened to and heard	Children will feel that they belong to their community, and have a	Independent advocacy will be offered to all Looked After children and young people.		Number of children and young people who have their voice shared in meetings.

	voice within that community	All looked after children and young people will be offered participation opportunities through who Cares? Scotland. Develop a forum to celebrate the successes of our care experienced children and young people.		Number of young people who are involved in collective participation opportunities. Number of CEYP sign posted to local groups and opportunities within the area from CS and WFWF team.
We want services to speak plainly to us/ we don't want services to judge us	Services will use simple language and we will understand why services are involved. Everyone will share an understanding of what we mean by early intervention.	All services will consider their use of language and young people will be co-produce changes. The signs of safety approach will be embedded in East Lothian in both written reports and meetings with all children and young people.		CP plan will have an easy read version for wider audience. All children and young people's social work plans will be based on the signs of safety approach.
We want to enjoy school and be supported	Children will have a positive experience in school, education and training and it will meet their needs. This will be supported by school staff and the work of the Education Support officer for Children and Young People with Care Experience.	Through the Raising Attainment Strategy, there are stretch aims to close the attainment gap between learners with care experience and those without for the following measures: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Primary school attendance. 2. Secondary school attendance. 3. Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy (Primary 1, 4 and 7 combined). 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce the gap by an annual minimum of 0.5% 2. Reduce the gap by an annual minimum of 2% 3. Reduce the gap by an annual minimum of 5%

		<p>4. Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels in numeracy (Primary 1, 4 and 7 combined).</p> <p>5. School leavers attaining five or more qualifications at level one, or above.</p>		<p>4. Reduce the gap by an annual minimum of 5%</p> <p>5. Reduce the gap by annual minimum of 4%</p>
We want support to achieve after school	Young people will have support to further study or work in fields that interest them.	<p>NHS provide pathways for employment in NHS for CEYP</p> <p>Promote college opportunities and have a holistic approach to wrapping the support around the young person (including a focus upon transitions).</p>		<p>Number of yp through that pathway.</p> <p>Number of completed, partially completed, and withdrawn care experienced young people.</p>
We want to have opportunities to live with enough resources to thrive.	Children, young people, and their families should not live in Poverty	Many of the above actions will link in with East Lothian's Council Poverty Plan, focusing on creating the community to support our young people an allow them to prosper.		Number of young people will have access to financial inclusion team to maximise their income through benefit entitlement.

The Promise is clear that the voice of all children, young people and their families should inform and shape our services. Over the lifetime of this plan, as Corporate Parents we pledge to continue and increase the involvement of voice within our services. This includes the understanding of how our services are experienced by our children, young people, and families. We want to use that understanding to improve our services and increase the role of voice within that improvement. This change will require both will and investment (time and money) to create equal partnerships.

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