Introduction

This is our pledge to the children looked after and care leavers who are served by North Somerset Council. We take our responsibilities as a parent to you very seriously and will do all we can to ensure you are safe, healthy and doing well in your life.

The pledge is made by the Councillors, Chief Executive, and Directors and everyone who works for us in all our services in every part of the council.

We consulted our young people in care and care leavers, to find out what they feel is important to them. The children looked after council created some questions / themes for sharing with young people and corporate parents. As a result of this process the following ideas were formed and will be the foundations for our pledge.

The pledge covers lots of things that are aimed at making life better for children and young people.

We have grouped these things into 5 headings:

1. Looking after your health
2. Keeping you safe
3. Being happy and doing well
4. Having your say and getting involved
5. Building your future

As good corporate parents to each child and young person we will represent your interests and act on your behalf to achieve the best possible outcomes for you.

In fulfilling this pledge North Somerset Council and its partners intend to ensure all our young people receive good quality care,
Looking after your health

Good health is a result of proper nutrition, regular exercise, health care and hygiene.

To live life to the fullest and enjoy every bit of it, it is extremely important for you to be healthy! Health and happiness go hand in hand.

We want you to be fit, well and happy. To do this we will:

✔ Make sure you are have an optician, doctor and dentist where you live and help arrange appointments.

✔ Give you regular health checks (at least once a year).

✔ Make sure you have all the up-to-date and relevant immunisations (injections).

✔ Make sure your healthcare information remains confidential.

✔ Follow up any information that was recorded in your care / pathway plan.

✔ Support you if you wish to use mental health services and professional counselling.

✔ Promote a healthy lifestyle by encouraging healthy eating, regular exercise, participation in sports, and generally taking care of yourself.

✔ Give you all the support you need to find out who you are and what you want out of life.

✔ Continue to offer health related support while you are a care leaver.

✔ Provide advice and guidance about taking care of your own health including smoking, drug and alcohol use.

This pledge will be reviewed in consultation with children and young people and those signing up to the commitments and brought up to date every year. The results of the consultation and the up to date pledge will be presented to the North Somerset Children and Families Partnership Board for their approval.

“I need a safe place, help to set up a flat, and lots of emotional support.”
✔ Support you if you wish to use services for contraception.
✔ Give you non judgmental advice and information about sexual health and relationships.

“I want my foster carer to be understanding when I get things wrong.”

Keeping you safe

Looked after children and care leavers should feel safe at home, in the community and at contact with family members. There are many risks in life. Learning to recognise and manage them is an important life skill. Safety and confidence is important for all children and young people.

‘Keeping you safe’ covers all aspects of children and young people’s safety. This includes keeping children safe from abuse and neglect, crime and anti-social behaviour, bullying, accidents and providing a safe and stable home environment. To make sure this happens we will:

✔ Help you feel safe, happy and confident where you live.

✔ Enable foster carers to make day to day decisions about things that affect you.
✔ Work with you to find the best place for you to live.
✔ Give you support and help you to plan your future using your care plan and pathway plans.
✔ Help stop bullying.
✔ Ensure that we have qualified staff who can meet your needs.
✔ Provide safe contact with family members where possible. If this cannot happen, we will explain why and ensure you understand.

✔ Work with you and involve you in the decision to find you a home, to help reduce the number of moves young people experience.

✔ Provide you with at least one suitcase or holdall for you to put your special items in while you move to help keep them safe.

“I need support for the future to not feel on my own.”
✓ Support you if you get into trouble and advise you on how to resolve it.
✓ Make sure you know who your social worker is and how to contact him or her.
✓ Ensure your social worker sees you at least every six weeks unless you are in a placement that will be your home until you are 18 in which case it will be at least every 12 weeks.
✓ These social work visits are the minimum we will provide and you can ask for extra visits if this would be helpful.
✓ We will make sure your social worker spends time with you so that you both get to know each other.
✓ Offer you training and support for you to live independently when you need it, for example preparation for adult life courses.

"I want my leaving care pa to call me on important days – when I start college, a new job, birthdays etc."

Getting involved and having your say

We know that you can and do help us develop our services, schools and other activities you are involved with.

We are pleased and proud that you want to do this. Making a positive contribution to your community is very important because it helps raise our understanding of what you want and expect. It also gives important information to corporate parents and people in the community about children looked after and care leavers.

We want what is best for you. This is why we plan to:
✓ Listen to your views and tell you how they make a difference.
✓ Inform and encourage you to get involved in activities in your local area.
✓ Value your achievements and the contribution you make to North Somerset.
✓ Make sure you have the opportunity to contribute to your review in person and in writing.
Listen to your views and make sure they are a major influence when making decisions about changes in your life.

Make sure that you can talk about any issues or problems with an independent advocate if you would like one.

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Develop a website on-line so that it gives you up-to-date news, views and information.

Promote the children looked after council and enable young people to take part.

Ensure the children looked after council meets with councillors and senior staff on a regular basis to discuss issues.

Seek your views through the children looked after council, the ‘Independence’ newsletter and other ways.

Involve young people in the recruitment of staff that deliver services to children looked after and care leavers including training and professional development.

Make sure ALL young people are involved, whatever your age and including those living away from North Somerset.

Use your comments and suggestions to improve services and influence staff and foster carer training.

“I want my social worker to respect me, follow up on actions, and keep me informed.”

Being happy and doing well

Enjoying life and achieving your goals is important for all children and young people to help you gain skills/experience which will enable you to grow into a confident young adult.

To support and encourage you in your dreams and plans we will make sure that:

✓ You are prepared and ready for school, emotionally and mentally.
✓ Ensure you attend and enjoy school as much as possible.
✓ Make sure ALL young people are involved, whatever your age and including those living away from North Somerset.
✓ Use your comments and suggestions to improve services and influence staff and foster carer training.

When I move home, I want my things to be looked after, not lost or broken.

“I want my social worker to respect me, follow up on actions, and keep me informed.”
✓ Encourage and enable you to achieve at school and reach standards that reflects your potential.

✓ Ensure you have a quiet place to study where you live.

✓ You get all the support we can give you to help make exams less stressful and get better grades.

✓ Help you with personal and social development.

✓ You can focus on what you want to achieve and help you make the most of your achievements.

✓ There are clear links between workers who are working with you and that you know how all the different workers fit together.

✓ You are updated on activities and sports going on in the community and you are supported and encouraged to get involved.

✓ Your achievements in your personal life and in school are celebrated.

✓ There are enjoyable activities for you to reward you for all your achievements.

✓ Ensure you know who the key people are in your life and what they can do for you in their role e.g. social worker, IRO, housing worker, health worker etc

”I want to feel part of the family.”

Building your future

We want all children and young people in North Somerset to have a positive future after education by embracing life long learning and employment opportunities. This is because having a job, a career or training is the best way of ensuring that you are able to enjoy a comfortable standard of living.

North Somerset Council holds high aspirations for your future. We believe in you. This is why we will:

✓ Talk with you about your hopes and ambitions and make plans about how you can work towards achieving them.

✓ Make sure you have the same opportunities as other children and young people.
✓ Provide you with extra educational support if you need it.
✓ Support you in your future independence.
✓ Help you access any services that will benefit you.
✓ Encourage you to continue your education and learning in a way that works for you.
✓ Make sure you have a care plan or pathway plan that you can influence, understand and promises you positive experiences and will be followed up.
✓ Give you opportunities to develop new skills.
✓ Promise that if anything goes wrong or doesn’t work out, we will give you advice and support to help you make a decision.
✓ Give you opportunities to gain work experience and do voluntary work in North Somerset and North Somerset Council.

✓ Provide you with careers advice and help you find training or work.
✓ Provide you with financial support when leaving care, incl. a grant to set up home, studying support etc.
✓ Provide you with a passport and driving lessons/a driving licence
✓ Give you advice, guidance and support to set you up in suitable housing when you leave care.

“I want a structured care plan.”

“I want my foster carer to help me feel normal.”
Glossary

Advocate
a person that can speak on your behalf to people you are uncomfortable with or at meetings or can help encourage you to speak out.

Anti-social behaviour
behaviour that lacks thought for others and that may cause damage to society

Children Looked After council
a group of children looked after who meet once a month to talk about the issues that matter to children looked after

Confidential
protecting your personal information, talking with you about who should know it, and only sharing it with people who need it to be able to help you

Consulted
we talked and asked questions

Corporate parents
people from the council who help you and make sure you are being looked after properly

Foundations
main structure

Housing support officer
someone who can give you advice on any housing situations you have

Hygiene
keeping the body clean to prevent infection and illness

IRO – Independent Reviewing Officer
they ensure good quality planning including chairing review meetings about the care plan

Poverty
having little or no money and few or no belongings

Nutrition
eating / food

For more information please contact:
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‘All the comments were made by young people while we were gathering information to create our pledge’.