**Our Promise**

Devon’s vision and pledge to Children in Care is that:

“We want for our looked after children what any parent should want for their child; to feel loved and cared for. To be happy, able to achieve their potential and given the best chances in life. Too often this is not the case and we need to do everything in our power to make things better for the future.”

**Our Pledge to our Looked After Children**

**Top 15 Priorities from Devon’s Children in Care Council**

1. We will not do anything that will make young people stand out as a child in care, this means we won’t ‘out’ young people, or take them out of lessons. Instead we will make sure we know who young people are happy telling about their situation.
2. If it is not possible to give young people a choice, we will be honest with them and explain why in full.
3. We will respect young peoples’ property; we will never move their things without consent, or in bin bags.
4. We will make sure young people have the opportunity to go on a yearly holiday. This might be with carers, family or school. It may be abroad, or in the UK for a few days or a week.
5. We will make sure that all social workers understand legislation, processes and entitlements so that young people are given clear consistent messages.
6. We will make sure there is always someone for young people to contact, if they need someone to talk to, this includes evenings and weekends.
7. We will celebrate young peoples’ 18th birthday with them and ensure it is a positive milestone in their life. This means we will not burden young people or worry about them having to move home as soon as they turn 18 and will discuss with them about how we can support them in celebrating their 18th.
8. We will provide young people with opportunities to build their confidence so that they are able to make their own decisions about their safety.
9. We will provide young people with clear information about staying over at friends and where necessary we will work with young people to create an agreement that keeps everyone safe.
10. We will involve young people in decisions about where they live and make sure they are given a choice about where and who they live with. We will record the choices offered to young people and what they say about them.
11. When we have to intervene over young peoples’ safety, we will make sure our actions are explained to young people in full and made clear.
12. We will make sure that changes in where young people live have little impact on the rest of their life e.g. not moving schools or away from friends, or social worker.
13. We will make sure that young people are told about any changes to where they live, at least a week before these changes will happen; this could include moving placements, or changes in who lives with them.
14. We will make sure that young people are treated fairly and equally within their foster families so that they feel at home and like part of the family. This means we won’t accept young people being given separate food, or not having equal access to rooms in the house.
15. We will involve young people in regular review meetings and any other meetings related to their care. We will make sure that young peoples’ thoughts and feelings are recorded at these meetings and that they are offered help expressing these, especially if they have a disability or find it hard to speak up.

**Full Pledge to Children in Care**

As your corporate parents it is our responsibility to act as good parents and ensure you have the same opportunities, experiences and..... that we would expect for our own children.

This pledge is our promise to you, as your corporate parents, to show you how we will do this.

**Our promises about your safety**

- We will ensure you feel safe at school, at your placement and with your friends and family.
- We will provide you with clear information about keeping safe, including safe sex and internet safety, so that you are able to make your own decisions about your safety and encourage you to make your own decisions.
- When we have to intervene over your safety, we will make sure our actions are explained to you and made clear.
- We will not do anything that will make you stand out as a child in care, this means we won’t ‘out’ you, or take you out of lessons. Instead we will make sure we know who you are happy telling about your situation.
- We will provide you with opportunities to build your confidence so that you are able to make your own decisions about your safety.
- We will provide you with clear information about staying over at friends and where necessary we will work with you to create an agreement that keeps everyone safe.
- We will work with you, if you need it, to deal with bullying.

**Our promises about your Health & Wellbeing**

- We will make sure that you have every opportunity to be healthy and happy.
- We will make sure you get referrals to appropriate services and that you are dealt with promptly and professionally.
- We will take an interest in your hobbies and interests and make sure you are given the opportunity to pursue them through helping you attend groups, finding you tuition, instruments and equipment.
- We will provide you with activities that help you pursue a healthy lifestyle, or support you to attend other groups and activities.
- We will make sure that you have a health assessment every year. We will make sure that these assessments are at a place you choose and where you feel comfortable, that they are one to one with a nurse and that you get to have a say about what is discussed either by completing a questionnaire beforehand or during the assessment.
Our promises about you where you live

- We will make sure you have somewhere to call home that is caring and stable.
- We will involve you in decisions about where you live and make sure you are given a choice about where you live and who you live with. We will record the choices offered to you and what you say about them.
- Whenever possible, we will make sure that you get to visit a placement before you move and meet the carers so that you know them before you move in.
- We will always makes sure that the options given to you, about where you live, will lead to better long-term plans for you, and not be quick or short term fixes. This includes never placing you in bed and breakfasts.
- If it is not possible to give you a choice, we will be honest with you and explain why in full.
- We will make sure that changes in where you live have little impact on the rest of your life e.g. not moving schools, or away from friends, or social worker.
- If you do move placements, or move back to live with family, we will make sure you are supported during this time of change and have everything you need to settle in.
- We will make sure that you are told about any changes to where you live at least a week before these changes will happen; this could include moving placements, changes in who lives with you.
- We will make sure that you have your own safe space, where you can have privacy and quiet time. We will make sure that this space is respected by your carers and social workers by writing up an agreement with you.
- We will respect your property; we will never move your things without consent or in bin bags.
- We will make sure that you are treated fairly and equally within your foster families so that you feel at home and like you’re part of the family. This means we won’t accept you being given separate food, or not have equal access to rooms in the house.
- When you leave a placement, even if it’s quickly, we will make sure you get the opportunity to have you say on what that placement was like, the good things and the bad. This will be recorded and used to make improvements on placements and in foster carer’s supervision.

Our promises about your voice

- We will listen to everything you say.
- We will provide you with clear information about how you can have your say; this will include information about making a complaint, getting your voice heard in meetings and information about the children in care council and any consultations it may run (plus information about your rights and entitlements).
- We will encourage you to have a say by regularly asking for your views, letting you know about participation groups, we will give you a wide range of ways to help you have your say.
- We will involve you in regular review meetings and any other meetings and plans related to your care. We will make sure that your thoughts and feelings are recorded at these meetings and that you are offered help expressing these, especially if you have a disability or find it hard to speak up.
Our promises about your family and lifestyle
- We will make sure that your religious and cultural needs are respected.
- We will make sure you have the opportunity to go on a yearly holiday. This might be with carers, family or school. It may be abroad, or in the UK for a few days or a week.
- We will keep you informed about contact arrangements with your family and how and when this can happen.
- We will make sure you get the chance to try new things and build your confidence.

Our promises about your education
- We will make sure that you reach your potential and achieve all you want to achieve.
- Before you start primary school, we will make sure that you can get an early years space with a child-minder or at a nursery, we will also make sure you have a place at a primary school near you.
- When you are in primary school we will make sure you are supported with your reading by asking your carers to read to you and provide you with books.
- When you come to the end of primary school, we will work with you to make sure you get to go to the secondary school of your choice, near where you live and your friends.
- When you are in secondary school we will make sure you are given all the support you need to achieve your very best.
- We will support you to access the college or university of your choice, should this be something you wish to do.
- At every stage of your education we will involve you in decisions about your education, this includes how your PEA is spent or when additional support is needed.
- We will support you to learn English if it’s not your first language.
- We will not make you feel different at school, this includes not taking you out of lessons without your permission and making sure forms and payment for school trips is prompt.
- We will take pride in your achievements (academic and non-academic) and tell you when we are proud of you.
- We will aim to make your school placements permanent so you don’t have to move schools any more than is needed.
- We will make sure you are given the opportunity to develop your skills and interests through help pay for extracurricular activities including tuition and helping you access clubs and opportunities.
- We will make sure you are given all the help you need to access academic and non-academic opportunities, even after you have left care, this could include supporting you to re-apply for college or seeking out apprenticeships.

Our promises about those who work with
- We will make sure that all social workers understand legislation, processes and entitlements so that you are given clear consistent messages.
- We will make sure that those who work with you treat you fairly, with respect and equitably.
- We will make sure that you are listened to by those who work with you.
- We will help you to understand your past by creating life story work with you when you are in long term foster care and providing you with later life letters.
- When you are ready, we will support and encourage you to access and read your files.
- We will make sure there is always someone for you to contact, if you need someone to talk to, this includes evenings and weekends.
Our promise about your future

- We will make sure you are given the best start in life and have a positive future.
- We will find ways to support you and help you do well in adult life.
- We understand that we all learn through mistakes and so will give you the freedom to make mistakes and learn from them. We will not judge you by the mistakes you make and will be ready to offer you support when needed to help you make right choices.
- We will make sure that your carers and social workers prepare you for adult life by working with you on independent living skills and helping you buy stuff for your own place.
- We will help you pursue educations and career based opportunities at any stage in your life, regardless of your age or past experiences.
- We will encourage you to get the best qualifications, training and advice careers.
- We will not judge you based on how you have acted in the past, but on who you are now.
- We will give you the opportunity to do work experience or an apprenticeship with the county council, district councils and other employers.
- We will make sure there is clear information about the support available to you, after you are 21 and that this support is consistent and equal.
- Before you leave care, we will talk to you about how you want to stay in touch, so that it’s clear and your choice. This could include a phased withdrawal of support so that it’s not immediate.

Our promises about when you leave care

- We will make sure you are well prepared for leaving care.
- We will prepare you for leaving care, and offer you support for things like finding somewhere to live, managing relationships and being independent.
- We will provide you with information about your entitlements and support you in accessing them.
- We will plan with you about when to leave care and identify what support you will need and who will provide it.
- We will make sure that you have suitable accommodation to move into.
- We will prepare you for independent living by offering financial support through the care leavers grant, as well as ensuring you have a deposit for your accommodation paid and driving lessons.
- We will help you get ready to living on your own by helping you to budget, cook, clean and experience what it might be like to live on your own.
- We will make sure that carers and social workers have done everything they can to give you the skills to live independently.
- We will celebrate your 18th birthday with you and ensure it is a positive milestone in your life. This means we will not burden you or worry you about having to move home as soon as you turn 18 and will talk with you about how we can support you in celebrating your 18th.