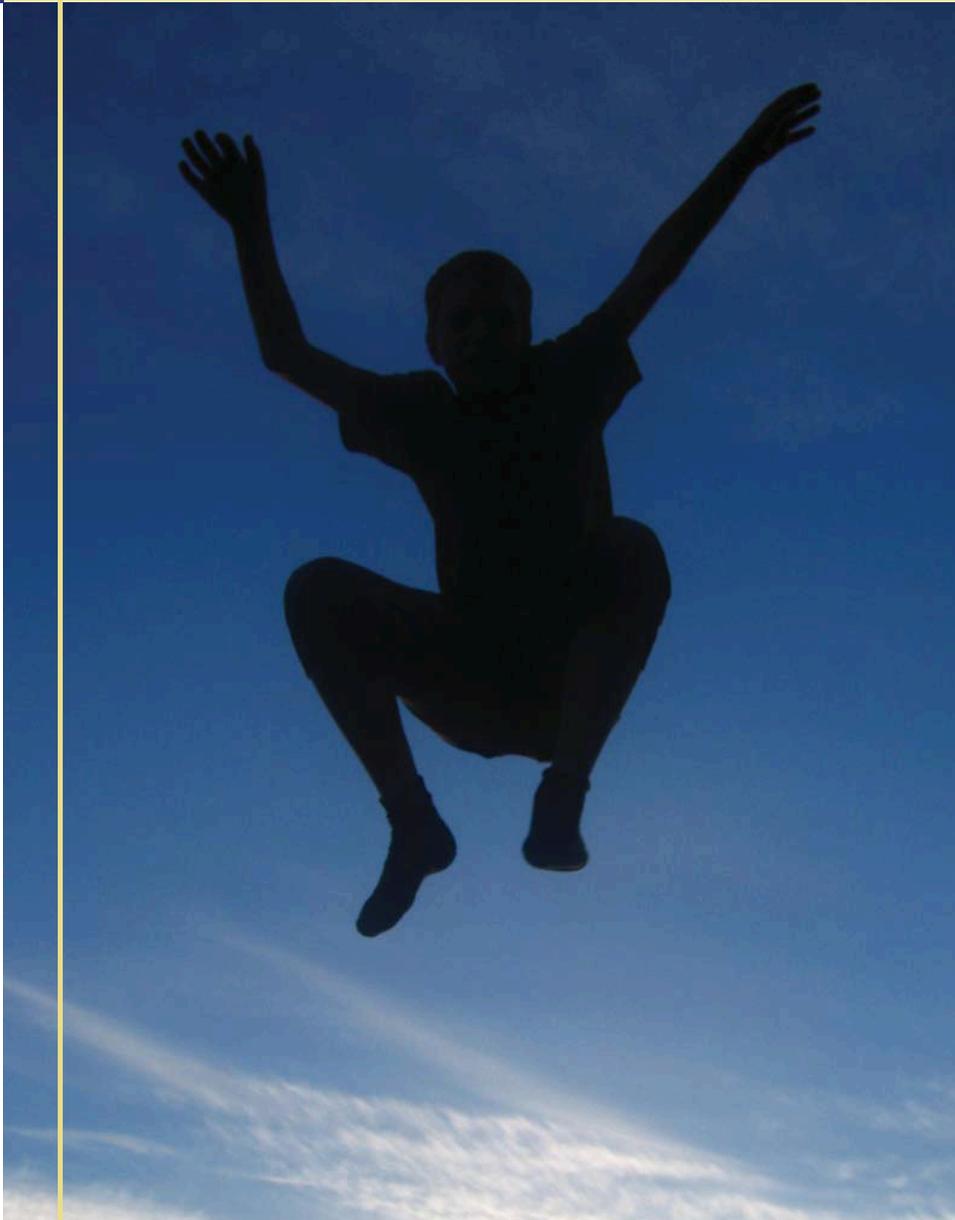


# Making the difference ... Putting the care back into corporate parenting

A practical guide for local authorities as corporate parents



**BOOKLET 4**  
Developing  
your pledge to  
children and  
young people

Rainer

? what makes the  
difference  
Project for children in care and care leavers

Equal



EUROPEAN UNION  
European Social Fund

# BOOKLET 4

## Developing your pledge to children and young people – a first step towards good corporate parenting

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### 1 Purpose of this booklet

This booklet describes how children and young people in care can be involved to develop the local authority 'Pledge' on their entitlement to services. It gives the policy background to the need for a Pledge and the introduction of formal service user involvement mechanisms in children's services, and provides a framework and tools for developing a Pledge, including our model and principles of good corporate parenting (see *Booklet 2*) and young people's feedback at national consultations, while focusing on the specific needs of the local care population. An example of local Pledge development in Warwickshire County Council is included to show how this process has worked in practice.

### 2 Introduction

The Pledge was introduced as a proposal in the Care Matters green paper<sup>1</sup> in October 2006. It is a promise from local authorities to all of its children in care, including care leavers, detailing what it will provide for them in terms of services, support and care. The proposal was overwhelmingly supported by young people during the consultation period for the green paper. However, they had

some strong ideas about how the Pledge should be structured and implemented, how authorities should be held accountable for it and how they should be involved in the process of developing it. Some of these can be found in Appendix II at the end of this document.

In June 2007, the white paper “Care Matters: Time for Change” was published.<sup>2</sup> The Pledge appears as part of a raft of measures to improve and strengthen local authorities’ role as corporate parents. The white paper is very clear that young people’s involvement in developing their Pledge – giving them the chance to shape and influence the parenting they receive – is essential to its success. As part of this process, the white paper proposes that each local authority should have a “Children in Care Council” that is instrumental in the process of feeding in young people’s views on the content of the Pledge and the ongoing monitoring and review mechanisms put in place to measure its success and maintain its currency. It also emphasises the whole local authority’s responsibility across all departments for its children in care.

The White Paper gives overall lead responsibility for the participation of young people in care to the Director of Children’s Services and the Lead Member. It is their responsibility to oversee the development of structures to enable young people’s participation and also to secure the co-operation of colleagues across departments and within the rest of the Children’s Trust as a corporate parent.

The white paper also expects that:

*“... pledges to be developed locally through the Children’s Trust arrangements and may include a regional dimension. They should ensure that:*

- *Children in Care are aware of basic statutory requirements with which local authorities should already be complying*
- *Children are aware of the key opportunities and benefits offered to them locally*
- *Children in Care are supported to engage with positive activities as much as possible*
- *Children in Care have been consulted and involved in developing the Pledge, including those with special needs and disabled children; and*
- *The Pledge is regularly reviewed and reflected in the local Children and Young People’s Plan or equivalent.”<sup>3</sup>*

The Government will monitor local authorities’ arrangements and structures that support young people’s input into service planning, including the Pledge, and will want to see evidence of “meaningful” involvement in decision-making relating to their care.

The purpose of this framework is to help local authorities create a structure for young people’s participation in the development, monitoring and review of the Pledge. The ‘What Makes the Difference?’ project (WMTD) has learned that this process is as important as the content, and that the long-term benefits of getting the process right are many. This framework will help authorities develop their Pledge while at the same time creating a long-standing structure and culture of participation and partnership working with the children and young people they parent.

The framework is grounded in the model and principles of good corporate parenting, developed by WMTD and evidenced by our work in local authorities over the life of the project (see *Booklet 2 in this guide*). In addition, WMTD supported Warwickshire County Council to develop their Pledge with its children and young people in care. Much of the framework for the Pledge that is set out here has been developed in partnership with them and is based on our joint learning from this process. A case study detailing the work with Warwickshire is included in this document.

In addition to the information included in this booklet, the WMTD online practice database (at <http://www.leavingcare.org>) provides examples of practice and tools for improving services to children and young people in and leaving care. These are designated under each of the Every Child Matters Outcomes<sup>4</sup> and reflect the WMTD model and principles of good parenting that places children's developmental and parenting needs within the ECM framework (see *Appendix III*). Resources found in the 'Making a Positive Contribution' section of the database can be used to help local authorities develop their structures for empowering children and young people in care. The WMTD the Empowerment in Practice theme summary also contains a brief guide to examples of good practice and case studies relating to service user involvement and empowerment that are evidenced by our research.<sup>5</sup>

### 3 The Function of the Pledge

The Pledge is a tool by which children and young people in and leaving care can have a direct impact on their care and become empowered in the process. WMTD has developed its work on the basis of empowering children and young people. We know that when structures and support are in place to enable children and young people to influence the services and care they receive and the decision-making that directly affects them, the outcomes are invariably positive.<sup>6</sup> Services become more responsive and meet needs more precisely; children and young people learn new skills and experience new opportunities that enhance their life chances. Equally, everyone participates in the process in partnership and this creates better relationships between children and young people and their carers.

WMTD believes that the best service a local authority can offer is that which most closely meets the parenting needs of the child or young person, and the Pledge should reflect this. It should be used not only to empower them, but also the person working most closely with them. Young people have told us that they want fewer adults working with them and, where possible, only one person who is ultimately responsible for the services they receive. This is the idea behind the role of the lead professional. We believe that the Pledge offers the opportunity to empower lead professionals to do this. By having a Pledge, the local authority has committed itself to delivering a particular service to its children and young people. The Pledge must then be evident in each child and young person's care or pathway plan, guiding the service they receive and setting it out clearly. It should cover all the usual areas and the specific needs of the child or young person concerned. It should also include the financial support available to the child or young person.

By setting out their entitlements, as specified in the Pledge, in children and young people's care or pathway plan, both they and their lead professional are empowered to enter into a parenting relationship unhindered by the constant need to refer back, seek permission or ask for information. It enables them to challenge from the basis of a clear agreement, where it is necessary; it also allows both professional and the child or young person to monitor and review the effectiveness of the care or pathway plan. The Pledge enables the development of an empowered caring relationship that meets the needs of the child or young person and allows them to be parented by the authority through the medium of a single worker. It is for this reason that each local authority should have its own Pledge, developed with its own children and young people.

*For further information on the WMTD model and principles of good corporate parenting, please see Booklets 2 and 3 of this guide.*

## 4 Content of the Pledge

From November 2006 to January 2007, WMTD ran four regional consultation events on the green paper Care Matters. During these events, young people participated in focus groups and a digital voting session to establish their views on a number of the proposals. Young people shared their views extensively on the Pledge proposal. Most of the young people in the consultation were care leavers but some were from care. Their ideas on the content of the Pledge cut across both groups.

The details of their views on the content of the Pledge can be found in Appendix II but the following headlines reflect the main areas of concern:

- An equal commitment to all children and young people in care.
- Leisure opportunities.
- Graduated support beyond care into adulthood and accommodation.
- Choice of when to move on.
- Financial support.
- Access to and relationships with professionals.
- Support to maintain relationships with family.
- Being listened to and heard/involvement in decision-making and SUI.
- Choice of placement/accommodation.
- Help with advocacy and complaints.
- Information on services and the teams providing them.
- Care planning and reviews.
- Support for parenting.
- Volunteering opportunities.
- Continuity of care – having one worker.
- Access to health services.

This is what young people said about the process of developing and maintaining a Pledge:

- The Pledge is a good idea in principle, if it is viewed as a contract between the local authority and young people.
- Young people should have a say about what is in the Pledge – this is essential because young people are the beneficiaries.
- The Pledge is a good idea, as long as it is not a token gesture and local authorities stick to it.
- Young people should be consulted in all decisions about their life and have their voices heard.
- Young people should be given real power to enforce the Pledge and should have a direct line of influence to the people who govern the local authority. Individuals must also be held accountable – the Pledge should be linked to job performance.

The White Paper ‘Care Matters: Time for Change’<sup>7</sup>, sets out a basic Pledge that includes the following:

- A commitment to involve children in decisions which affect them and to take account of their wishes and expressed feelings about the services they receive.
- Qualified social workers for every child in care, with clear arrangements in place for the child in care to contact his/her social worker as necessary.
- Effective assessment of individual needs and an up-to-date care plan based on those needs.
- A placement with carers who can meet the child’s needs.
- Contact with siblings and birth parents in line with children’s care plan.
- Regular reviews in which children will be enabled to participate meaningfully (particularly for disabled children with communication difficulties).
- Services which recognise the diverse ethnic and cultural needs of the children.
- Access to advocacy services if children have a complaint.
- An Independent Reviewing Officer to ensure children’s rights are upheld.
- Access to high quality free early years provision at age 3 and 4.
- A place at a good school.
- A designated teacher in school to ensure high quality support in school.
- Details of support available to participate in positive leisure time activities.
- Support to reduce absence from school.
- Help to catch up with school work if they fall behind.
- Regular assessments of their health (physical and emotional).
- Details of support available when they move on from care.
- The support young people can expect when entering further and higher education.
- How the local authority will support young people seeking employment, including employment with training.

For the Pledge to function as a tool in an empowered model of corporate parenting, it must be developed by each local authority with its own children and young people. Regional or area Pledges will not empower children and young people or their workers because the Pledge will not be specific enough to the area and the needs of the children and young people within it. Critical to this process is that local authorities have a strong and informed sense of what children and young people in their care need and what can be provided to them from their own resources. When planning the Pledge development process, authorities should draw on evidence that is already available to them through their Children and Young People’s Plans, Joint Area Reviews, any recent needs assessments relating to children and young people in and leaving care and also any recent consultation or participation work that can inform the process. Authorities should design their monitoring and review structures with children and young people and with other plans and priorities in mind.

The content of the Pledge should be reviewed annually by all stakeholders. The efficacy of the Pledge can be monitored through care and pathway review processes and this can contribute to the annual Pledge review.

To see this process succeed, local authorities will need to be clear that they have a corporate role as a parent and that the Pledge, its content, purpose and value should be understood across all departments. The successful development of a Pledge in partnership with children and young people should be celebrated as a commitment to good corporate parenting by the authority.

## 5 The 'Children in Care Council'

'Care Matters: Time for Change' suggests that each local authority should have a 'Children in Care Council' (CICC) as the main mechanism by which authorities and children and young people should work together. Some authorities already have active fora for children and young people to meet, discuss issues and give their views to managers, directors and council members. "Care Matters" is clear that the use of a CICC or forum is crucial to the success of the Pledge and will enhance the accountability for the Pledge within the local authority. However councils, fora or groups should not be the only mechanism that local authorities use to interact with children and young people and involve them in the creation of the Pledge. Consideration should be given to providing a range of methods for young people to feed in their views. The WMTD online database ([www.leavingcare.org](http://www.leavingcare.org)) has good practice examples of working fora in a number of local authorities in England and has a range of examples of consultation and participation methods that authorities may find useful.

As many authorities will choose to develop a Children in Care Council as their main link between children and young people and managers or lead members, here are some general points on developing them. The main requirements of a strong working forum or council for children and young people include:

- The group is children- and young people-led, meets regularly, has a clear agenda and purpose and is self-determining in relation to how and when it meets, what format the meetings take and items for discussion. The group should be supported by staff and should ultimately aim to be self-supporting with minimal intervention from staff.
- All children and young people are encouraged to participate with or within the group, ensuring that those that are often under-represented or marginalised have equal access and opportunity to participate.
- The group provides the opportunity for all children and young people to develop the skills needed to enhance their participation within it and their capacity to represent it and other young people.
- The group has clear lines of communication and interaction with appropriate staff, including a worker to support the running of the group, appropriate service managers and in particular the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Looked After Children. The interaction of the group with service managers and directors is fundamental to the success of the Pledge.
- The local authority must take steps to ensure that the whole organisation understands the nature of the group, its purpose, the communication structures that surround it, its role within the development of a local authority-wide corporate parenting model and the value of the children and young people's participation within it.

## 6 Framework for Developing the Pledge

Action	Issues, Tasks, Considerations
<b>Review Structures for Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How many groups, fora or councils already exist to enable children and young people's views to be heard by the local authority?</li> <li>● What other mechanisms have been used to gather children and young people's views in the authority?</li> <li>● Which method has been most successful?</li> <li>● Which other teams within Children's Services have been engaging young people? What tools or strategies or expertise can they share with you?</li> </ul>
<b>Develop and Implement New Structures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop ideas and agree how children and young people will be supported and enabled to participate in the Pledge process.</li> <li>● Consider: Children in Care Council (see <i>previous section</i>), linking already established groups and fora, and ensuring the participation of more marginalised groups including disabled children and young people.</li> <li>● Consider: Possible structures that might have your CICC at the centre with other groups linking in and the need to keep membership of the CICC changing over time to prevent staleness.</li> </ul>
<b>Review Current Service Provision, Service Plans and Previous Consultations with Children and Young People</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Take time to review current services, the Children and Young People's Plan and outcomes of the most recent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Annual Performance Assessment/ Joint Area Review. Give consideration to the Ofsted inspection framework with reference to the ECM outcomes.</li> <li>● Review the WMTD parenting model and principles of good corporate parenting, which outlines children's parenting needs aligned within the ECM outcomes (see <i>Appendix III in this booklet</i>).</li> <li>● Review the outcomes of any previous consultation work with children and young people on the parenting and support they receive in care and leaving care (see <i>the outcomes of WMTD's Care Matters consultation on the Pledge in Appendix II</i>).</li> </ul>
<b>Develop and Run Meetings with Children and Young People, Officers and Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Plan for sessions in which young people, officers and members can work together to develop the Pledge. The sessions should run interactively to enable children and young people to participate meaningfully but enjoyably.</li> <li>● The sessions should focus on examining the priorities of young people in relation to the parenting and support they receive from the local authority. The purpose of the session is for young people and service managers, the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member to work together to agree those priorities that will form the basis of the Pledge to children and young people.</li> <li>● Children, young people and members will find a meeting prior to the first joint meeting helpful. This will help them to think through the issues and consider how they can best communicate them.</li> </ul>

(continued)

Action	Issues, Tasks, Considerations
<p><i>(continued)</i></p> <p><b>Present Draft for Comments and Agreement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The local authority should present all children and young people in care with a draft of the Pledge for final comments.</li> <li>● A final meeting of managers, members, children and young people should confirm the final Pledge.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pledge Published and Available to All</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Pledge must be published and made available to all children and young people in care.</li> <li>● Celebrate the Pledge by publicising it within the authority.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pledge Implemented through Care Planning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Pledge must be implemented throughout the local authority specifically within the care and pathway planning and review process and through the relationship between the child or young person and their Lead Professional.</li> <li>● The Pledge must be an active commitment to children and young people from the local authority. Children and young people should have the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the Pledge through their usual contributions to the care or pathway planning process.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Structure for Accountability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The local authority must establish a means by which the local authority can be held accountable to the commitments made in the Pledge and how its effectiveness can be monitored and reviewed, in partnership with the Children in Care Council, Forum or Group.</li> <li>● The Pledge should provide a focus around which complaints can be made and responded to.</li> <li>● In addition there are other forms of external evaluation and inspection that are available to local authorities such as the LILAC scheme. This scheme provides young people who are trained as inspectors of services to children in care. There is more information about LILAC at <a href="http://leavingcare.org">http://leavingcare.org</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Annual Review with Children and Young People</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Pledge should be reviewed annually by children and young people and managers, and changes should be agreed where appropriate.</li> </ul>

## 7 Warwickshire and the Pledge

WMTD has supported Warwickshire County Council to develop a Pledge to all of the children and young people in the county who are in or leaving care. This has formed part of WMTD's partnership with Warwickshire in taking forward their corporate parenting strategy.

The work on the Pledge began in August 2007 with a visit by young people from Warwickshire's Care Leavers' Forum to the offices of WMTD in London. The young people, supported by a worker, learned about the Pledge and began to think about what the Pledge might involve in Warwickshire.

Behind the scenes, staff from WMTD had discussions with staff from Warwickshire (primarily the Development Manager in the leaving care service), mapping out a process for the development of the Pledge as a joint venture between elected members, officers and children and young people. Particular consideration was given to how all parties could work together on an equal footing without children and young people being disempowered in the process.

WMTD staff made two visits to the Warwickshire Care Leavers' Forum to meet with the young people, explain the process of developing the Pledge and work on its possible content. Another Warwickshire-based worker developed some ideas with under-16s who were still in care at the same time.

In addition, the Development Manager for Leaving Care in Warwickshire worked closely with elected members from the Corporate Parenting Steering Group and an Assistant Director from the Children, Young People and Families Directorate to bring about support for a single Pledge for the authority with a strong emphasis on the involvement of children and young people in partnership with members and officers.

The development of the work focused on the process. The WMTD and Warwickshire staff worked together to design a process that would enable all parties to reflect on their own ideas before meeting as a group to discuss them. This was particularly important for children and young people and for members. Both groups needed time to think about what they wanted to say to each other and how best to communicate with each other.

After the meetings with the young people, the staff from WMTD and Warwickshire met with two elected members from the Corporate Parenting Steering Group to discuss further opportunities for the development of the Pledge and to emphasise the role of the elected members and others in the process. WMTD then went on to meet with the Assistant Director from the Directorate to discuss an event in December where children and young people would be working with members and officers for the first time.

In December 2007 the first joint meeting of members, children and young people and officers took place, at which they discussed ideas for the Pledge and began a process of prioritising them. Children and young people from across the county were involved and asylum seeking and disabled children and young people were represented. This work was taken forward to a second meeting in February 2008 which once again brought together children, young people, members and officers to begin the process of writing a first draft of the Pledge.

Alongside the process of developing the content of the Pledge, another vital task has been progressing. The Government's white paper, 'Care Matters – Time for Change', suggests that a Children in Care Council is developed in each local authority to promote effective communication between lead members, officers and children and young people. Warwickshire, in developing their Pledge, are at the same time working towards bringing the related children and young people's groups and fora together to create a Children in Care Council, which in the long term will monitor and evaluate both the Pledge and other aspects of services provided to them.

The work in Warwickshire is ongoing and the authority is committed to ensuring that the process is given the time it needs to be successful.

Warwickshire represents a good practice example of Pledge development in the following ways:

- The commitment to develop a Pledge in partnership with the children and young people the authority cares for, with the aim of detailing the services and support that meet their *specific needs* rather than providing a bland and unspecific statement of values or principles.
- The commitment to use the process to develop sustainable structures for greater involvement of children and young people in the decision-making related to their care. This is to be welcomed as a form of empowerment – involving children and young people and in so doing, providing them with an opportunity to learn new skills and have new experiences that will enhance their confidence.
- The commitment to incorporating the Pledge as part of care and pathway planning for children and young people. If the Pledge is reflected in the plan for the child or young person, it empowers them and the person working most closely with them to be able to make decisions without recourse to others.
- The commitment to monitor, evaluate and review the Pledge on a regular basis and in partnership with children and young people, thereby making the Pledge a functional tool for the improvement of services and outcomes for children in care and care leavers rather than a document to be framed and placed on a wall.

## 8 Conclusion

This document will help you begin to think about how to develop your Pledge with the children and young people that you parent. Developing a Pledge is a long process and is a great opportunity to address the structures of empowerment in your local authority. The process will be enjoyable and beneficial to all who participate as well as offering opportunities for children and young people in and leaving care to develop new skills.

*For further information, examples of good practice and useful tools to help you with this process see the website <http://www.leavingcare.org>*

## Appendix I:

### Developing the Content of the Pledge with Young People

#### Aims and objectives of the session

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For children and young people to work together with service managers, directors and elected members to agree the content of the Pledge for all children and young people in care.

#### Roles

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- **The Facilitator:** The Facilitator is responsible for running the session, ensuring that all parts of the session are completed and that everyone has a fair and equal chance to speak and share their views. It is the Facilitator's role to summarise what has been agreed as the session goes along and do the same at the end so that everyone is clear about exactly what has been agreed and what will happen next. The Facilitator should be completely independent and impartial.
- **All Participants:** Participants are there to share their views and experiences with each other and work together positively so that the group can reach an agreement on the best possible Pledge for children and young people in care.

#### Ground rules

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The Facilitator should begin the session with a discussion about ground rules. The group should agree on rules that will enable participants to work well together. These might include listening to each other, being positive or not making it personal. The group should discuss and agree these together.

#### Purpose of the session

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The facilitator should explain the purpose of the session, what the stages of the process will be and what will happen after the day has been completed. The next steps should be emphasised again at the end of the session and everyone should agree them. It is the facilitator's role to ensure that everyone is clear about the purpose of the session and to what degree it will influence the final draft of the Pledge.

#### Icebreaker

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The facilitator must lead an icebreaker to enable the group to get to know each other and work as a team.

## Activity One

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- The group splits into small working groups. Each group must contain at least one manager/director/lead member. Each group is given a copy of the ECM outcomes.
- Each group discusses the parenting, care and support that children and young people in and leaving care currently receive under each of the ECM outcome headings (see *Appendix III*) and writes their ideas down on a piece of flipchart paper. (30 minutes)
- The facilitator attaches these to the walls of the room and the working group has a chance to look at other groups' ideas. (15 minutes)
- The groups get back together to discuss what they have seen from the other groups' work and to identify anything that's missing and that they think should be included in the Pledge. This should also be written up on the flipchart and placed on the walls of the training room. (15 minutes)
- The whole group reviews what has been discussed and whether it represents the full spread of experiences of parenting, care and support that children and young people have had or should have.
- The facilitator should ask processing questions to establish the group's response to the activity.

Key questions: Is this the basis for the Pledge? Is there anything missing? What is it? If this were the Pledge, would that be OK?

### BREAK

## Activity Two

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- The larger group splits again into different working groups. Each group should have at least one manager/director/lead member within it.
- The group is given copies of the WMTD green paper consultation on the Pledge and the Care Matters: Time for Change basic Pledge outline with reference to the WMTD model and principles of good corporate parenting within the ECM outcomes (see *Appendix III*).
- Each group has time to look over the documents and discuss them and compare them to the flipcharts already on the walls. What are the differences and similarities? (20 minutes)
- One person from each working group feeds back the main points of the discussion to the wider group. (20 minutes)

Key questions from facilitator on the feedback from groups.

## LONG BREAK

**(facilitator collates all the suggestions for each ECM outcome)**

### Activity Three

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- The larger group splits into five; each group represents one of the ECM outcomes.
- Each group prioritises all the suggestions under their ECM outcome and discusses them in full. (30 minutes)
- Each group feeds back their priorities to the larger group. (40 minutes)

## SHORT BREAK

### Activity Four

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The whole group must now prioritise the suggestions based on the discussion in the previous activity. This can be done using the Bull's Eye method. The facilitator places a red circle in the middle of the floor of the training room – this is the Bull's Eye.

- The facilitator then reads out each proposal under each of the ECM outcomes. When the proposal is read out the group must stand somewhere in the room in relation to the Bull's Eye to indicate how much they are in agreement with the proposal being part of the Pledge.
- A scoring system will be used to give marks out of 5 to each proposal. 5 is a bull's eye, the marks 4 to 0 going outwards in scoring rings from the centre. The total score for each proposal is worked out by counting the number of people standing in the corresponding scoring ring.
- The facilitator will keep score. The group will need to agree what the threshold score will be for a proposal to be included.

This should give the group its final outline Pledge under each of the ECM outcomes.

## The close

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The facilitator should explain what the process will be to finalise the Pledge and how young people will continue to be involved in its development, implementation and review.

## **Appendix II:**

### **Young People's Views on the Pledge – Comments by Young People at the WMTD Regional Care Matters Consultation Events 2006–2007<sup>8</sup>**

## **Comments in favour of a Pledge**

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### **General**

- The Pledge is a good idea in principle, if it is viewed as a contract between the local authority and young people.
- Young people should have a say about what is in the Pledge – this is essential because young people are the beneficiaries.

### **Avoid tokenism**

- The Pledge is a good idea, as long as it is not a token gesture and local authorities stick to it.

### **Consistency**

- All local authorities should give the same Pledge.

## **Comments/reservations against a Pledge**

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### **Lack of faith**

- A number of young people had little faith that local authorities would actually keep their Pledge.

## **Young people's ideas on what the Pledge should include**

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### **An equal commitment to all children and young people in care**

- A commitment to support young people, no matter what, however good or bad or successful they are thought of as being.

### **Leisure opportunities**

- Participation in sports – encouragement for young people to get involved in and “follow their dreams” in sports.
- Opportunities to play football, general sports training, horse-riding classes, badminton and other team sports, which provide social, interpersonal and health

benefits. But young people should make up their own minds whether or not they want to participate in leisure activities, and the types of activities should also be led by what each young person wants to do, rather than the risk assessments that the local authority can get approved.

- Free gym card.
- Council leisure cards. “You should be able to get activity passes on a regular or weekly basis.” A minimum of 4 hours per week of free leisure/sports activities should be offered. An unlimited amount of leisure activities should be offered.
- Local authorities should forge greater/improved links with existing clubs and projects as well as offering in-house opportunities.
- “The leisure centre needs to be near young people”.
- “If you are living with a foster family it depends if they go and do exercise, whilst in the children’s home you can get to do more exercise or activities”.
- There should be more things to do in the community.

### **Graduated support beyond care into adulthood and accommodation**

- Young people should be allowed to stay in care until they are 21, if they choose.
- Continuing care and support with accommodation until the age of 25. “Aftercare team should continue past 21, until 24 to 25 for everyone, including young parents, not just those at Uni”.
- Independence should be gradual, ideally with young people being given an independent test flat. There should always be a choice of return to care.
- Full support when young person is moving out.
- More help and support to live independently, including budgeting and life skills.
- Independence training centres could be developed by young people within local communities for *all* young people from the local community, whether in care or not.
- The transition of leaving care, which can be difficult, should be agreed by both the young person and their key worker when they both feel that they are ready. The decision should be based on the needs of the young person, not finances/budget.
- A decent placement in a decent area – somewhere workers would want their children to live.

### **Choice when to move on**

- “The age you move on should be your choice.” Young people should have a choice when they want to move.
- “Social care are not going to let you walk off into your own place if you’re not ready.”
- “The cut-off should be the same for disabled young people referred on to adult services.”

## Financial support

- The amount provided to a young person must not be too much or too little, but be an appropriate amount.
- Rent paid until 21, especially for those in education.
- Financial support for young people when they start work (at least for the first month).
- Money to pay for a holiday between 16 and 18.
- Leaving care grant of £2500 – inflation linked, and all local authorities must pay the same rate. Leaving care grants should be standardised, so that all young people are treated fairly.
- Support to improve young people's financial management skills.
- All types of education costs (fees, Open University) should be paid for by the local authority.
- Assistance with travel.
- "If that (budgeting) was being done then we would know how much money could be spent on us."
- "They should tell me what financial assistance I am entitled to. I had to sacrifice my money for college enrolment, which is the responsibility of the local authority. When I ask for money they think I'm money grabbing." "(Young people should) go independently to get a financial assessment. (Young people should) request a list telling you what you're entitled to."
- "In foster care I got the same amount as I did in independence. They should have given me less money when I was younger and more now that I am older."

## Access to and relationships with professionals

- Young people should have a Personal Advisor until 21 and a social worker until 25.
- Easy access to a social worker (maybe on a 24 hour a day basis).
- 24/7 support/access to social workers (especially important for those living alone, and in emergencies), in addition to support from other staff/workers e.g. residential workers and foster carers.
- A mobile or phone card with which to contact your social worker 24/7 and which can be used in an emergency.
- Weekly visits from the social worker and one day a week which is put aside to sort things out.
- Act like a good parent does – e.g. take children and young people to the doctor.

## Support to maintain relationships with family

- Option to choose if young people want to see parents/family.

- Help to maintain/ avoid jeopardising relationship with family, e.g. have a plan for contact with family when young people leave care, including the frequency and time of contact.
- Supported contact with someone from Social Services or community workers to come with you to visit your birth family.

### **Continuity of care**

- “You should have one worker that you are tied to.”

### **Being listened to and heard and involvement in decision making and service delivery**

- Young people should be able to talk to the whole social services team after their weekly meeting.
- There needs to be discussion meetings like this (consultation event) in every county.
- Young people should be consulted in all decisions about their lives and have their voices heard.
- A young persons’ office could be set up in every local area to feed directly into national government.

### **Choice of placement/accommodation**

- There needs to be a greater variety, so that people can make a choice of placement. Choice of a high quality placement.
- “You had your own key and your own room you could lock – so it was good!”
- “I reckon B&B’s should be out of the question!”

### **Help with advocacy and complaints**

- Compensation for young people if their local authority fails them.
- Offer of support from an independent advocate (although young people should have the choice to access one). The link/tie between the advocate and the local authority is important – on one hand, it is important for the advocate to be independent, so that trust can be built with young people, but for the advocate to have any power and ability to truly effect change there must be a connection with the local authority. Can an advocate be truly independent *and* effective?!
- Support from a peer advocate (bringing a two-way benefit for the young person and the peer advocate). Peer advocates could be supported along a youth participation scheme route.
- “A floating advocate would be useful to help young people relay their suggestions to social services.
- “RE-RUN in Dorset are brilliant, they are everything! They will go to the most professional person for your thing and then let you know.”

## Information for children and young people

- A booklet/manual for children and young people with information about their care team (emergency contacts, how it works, entitlements etc).

## Care planning

- Regular reviews of the care received by children and young people.

## Support for parenting

- More support for young mothers.

## Volunteering

- Opportunities to volunteer (e.g. as offered by A National Voice), including mentoring and 'shadowing' other young people (which would improve communication and interpersonal skills). Support would be needed in the form of travel, lunch etc. "Volunteering looks good on your CV and widens your opinion, so you learn about different things."
- "Opportunities for volunteering need to be advertised so that young people know that there are more activities and where to go".

## Access to health services

- There should be exceptions for care leavers, so if there isn't an NHS dentist, you should be able to be seen privately.
- "The day I got expelled from school I started doing drugs".
- Health check with GP, optician and dentist etc.
- Free prescriptions.

## How young people think local authorities can be made to stick to their Pledge, and their own role in this

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### Mechanisms of accountability

- The Pledge should be linked to local authority performance indicators.
- Individuals must also be held accountable – the Pledge should be linked to job performance, e.g. social workers and PAs should be held responsible for not keeping their promises by either firing them, bringing disciplinary action against them, nagging them, and other consequences.
- All children and young people should have an advocate.

## Appendix III:

### Children's Developmental and Parenting Needs with Every Child Matters Outcomes

#### Be Healthy –

physically, sexually, and live healthy lifestyles ... and mentally and emotionally, and not take illegal drugs:

- **Everyday care and help** (essential care e.g. cleanliness, clothing, food, warmth, and being taken to the doctor, dentist, optician for checkups and immunisation etc).
- **Knowledge, advice and guidance** (about lifestyle choices e.g. nutrition, diet, smoking, sexual health, effects of drugs).
- **Play, fun and exercise** (sport, hobbies, arts, culture, leisure etc).
- **Modelling good behaviour** (parents have own healthy lifestyles and diet).
- **Teaching them to do things for themselves and for others** (teaching them how to clean and groom themselves).
- **Choice to affect what happens to them, to take risks and to make decisions for themselves** (so they learn from risky behaviour).
- **Encouraging positive relationships with others** (e.g. with peers who don't take drugs and who practise safe sex).
- **Stability, security and continuity** (in where they live and in their relationships – building a strong and lasting attachment to carers to build trust, confidence and self-esteem and good relationships with others).
- **Always being there** (to give emotional and practical support, reassurance and guidance on health issues, whenever they need it).
- **Understanding, empathy and acceptance** (so they can empathise with and accept others, and build self-esteem).
- **Talking, listening and respect** (so they feel in control and important in their own right).
- **Warmth, love and affection** (so they feel cared for as they are and can love others in return).
- **Making them feel wanted and that they belong** (to build self-worth and a sense of security).
- **Encouragement, expectations and praise** (to increase confidence and self esteem, have high standards and be able to say no to unhealthy activities).
- **Recognising their unique needs and pushing to get help when they need it** (getting them everyday healthcare and specialist assessment and treatment of physical, emotional or mental health problems when needed).

- **Support from wider family, friends and others** (to provide practical and emotional support and respite to parents so they can give all of the above, and to model good behaviour).
- **Healthy and safe environment** (away from high pollution, dangerous traffic, high crime etc).
- **Comfortable and safe housing** (warm, dry, clean and sound).
- **Local and national resources; public and welfare services** (access to health services and leisure facilities, open spaces, water and sanitation, services; health welfare benefits etc).
- **School, college and university** (to learn more about health and healthy lifestyles).
- **Enough money** (to buy healthy food, access leisure and health facilities and afford accommodation free from health hazards).
- **Supportive laws and government** (health, safety and public health laws and policies).

## Stay Safe –

*from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation, accidental injury and death, bullying and discrimination, crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school ... and have security and stability and be cared for:*

- **Everyday care and help** (providing essential care and not neglecting their children).
- **Keeping them safe from harm** (protection from household hazards and accidental or deliberate injury or abuse).
- **Always being there** (to keep an eye on them and know where they are, and to give support whenever needed)
- **Stability, security and continuity** (in where they live and having a strong, trusting and lasting attachment to their children).
- **Knowledge, advice and guidance** (about what's safe or dangerous).
- **Modelling good behaviour** (not abusing, neglecting or bullying their children, or others).
- **Encouraging positive relationships with others** (e.g. with peers who have safe and positive lifestyles).
- **Recognising their unique needs and pushing to get help when they need it** (e.g. intervening to stop them being bullied or abused at school).
- **Showing respect for others** (parents not being violent to others).
- **Talking, listening and respect** (so they feel able to say when they feel unsafe, unstable or insecure and when they are in danger).
- **Telling them what is going to happen and when** (so they can prepare for and deal successfully with change).

- **Choice to affect what happens to them, to take risks and to make decisions for themselves** (so they feel more in control and can learn from their own behaviour).
- **Making them feel wanted and that they belong** (to feel secure, worthy and less vulnerable to exploitation and abuse).
- **Warmth, love and affection** (so they feel cared for, valued and less vulnerable to exploitation and abuse).
- **Understanding and empathy** (to recognise their need for special help or protection).
- **Encouragement, expectation and praise** (to boost self-esteem, feel worthy and avoid vulnerability and dependency on others).
- **Support from wider family, friends and others** (to provide practical and emotional support and respite to parents and carers and to model good behaviour).
- **Healthy and safe environment** (e.g. safe roads and public places, un-crowded and well designed housing, responsible town planning etc).
- **Comfortable and safe housing** (safe building work and architectural design, un-cramped accommodation).
- **Enough money** (to afford safe housing, buy safe household appliances and safety equipment, to provide a decent standard of living and avoid economic vulnerability, destitution etc).
- **Local and national resources; public and welfare services** (law enforcement services).
- **Supportive laws and government** (child protection, criminal, public order and housing/health and safety laws, school anti-bullying policies etc).
- **Acceptance and belonging** (so they are free from abuse based on intolerance in the community).

## Enjoy and Achieve –

**be ready, attend and enjoy school; achieve stretching national educational standards at primary and secondary school; achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation.**

- **Everyday care and help** (getting them to school, making sure they eat well and have suitable clothing, providing books, computers, other learning materials etc).
- **Encouragement, expectation and praise** (to have positive attitudes about the value of education, set aspirations for the future and motivate and reward them to reach their full potential).
- **Modelling good behaviour** (parents improving their own learning and self development).
- **Play, fun and exercise** (for mental and physical growth and to learn to socialise with others).
- **Talking, listening and respect** (helping them to think through their goals and aspirations and to say when they need help).
- **Understanding, empathy and acceptance** (to back them in what they want to do).

- **Recognising their unique needs and pushing to get help when they need it** (e.g. to get special educational needs assessed and met, get individual tuition/educational support and other unmet needs that undermine children's education e.g. lack of stability or emotional and behavioural problems).
- **Knowledge, advice and guidance** (to share parents' own learning, and stimulate children's appetite for learning, and to know about the stages of education, education choices, what's needed etc).
- **Teaching them to do things for themselves and for others** (e.g. to read and count, and to do school work).
- **Always being there** (to support them through triumphs and disappointments; to keep an eye on how they are getting on, and know when to help with school work; to attend parents' evenings and to be in touch with school to sort out problems).
- **Stability and continuity** (e.g. minimising changes of school or other disruptions, e.g. exclusions, at key stages of learning).
- **Opportunities to experience new challenges, places and people** (to stimulate curiosity, learn about the world, master new skills and build confidence and self esteem).
- **Encouraging positive relationships with others** (e.g. friendships with other children who want to learn and achieve).
- **Choice to affect what happens to them, to take risks and to make decisions for themselves** (e.g. choice to decide if and when to change schools, what school and leisure/activities they attend, the type of support they get and what they want to do in life).
- **Showing respect for others** (e.g. for teachers and individuals who promote learning and its value).
- **Support from family, friends and other people** (to give practical help and reinforce positive attitudes toward the value of education and achievement and to model positive behaviour).
- **School, college and university** (as a base for learning).
- **Local and national resources; public and social welfare services** (e.g. public transport, libraries, sports and leisure entertainment facilities, community events, other learning providers, financial support for learning, leisure and transport costs etc).
- **Enough money** (to buy books, computers, sports equipment and to pay for leisure, sports and entertainment etc).
- **Comfortable and safe housing** (with privacy and space for learning).
- **Supportive laws and government** (education laws and school governance policies etc).

## Make a Positive Contribution –

by engaging in decision-making and supporting the community and environment; abiding by the law and having positive behaviour in and out of school; developing positive relationships and choosing not to bully and discriminate; developing self-confidence and successfully dealing with significant life changes and challenges; and developing enterprising behaviour.

- **Fair rules and discipline** (that are clear, reasonable, change appropriately with maturity and are applied fairly and consistently, without favouritism).
- **Modelling good behaviour** (showing what is right and wrong by parents' own actions and attitudes, how to behave with others and what is expected of them).
- **Talking, listening and respect** (so children are motivated to do the same with others).
- **Understanding, empathy and acceptance** (so they can empathise with and accept others, and be motivated to help others in the community).
- **Making them feel wanted and that they belong** (so they feel worthy and confident).
- **An understanding of their family's history, background and beliefs** (so they feel a sense of connection to their heritage and a motivation to contribute).
- **Knowledge, advice and guidance** (about the world, the laws of the land and their responsibilities and rights as parents and citizens, social, ethical and moral challenges etc).
- **Opportunities to experience new challenges, places and people** (to stimulate curiosity, learn new practical, mental and social skills and to build an appreciation and tolerance for others).
- **Recognising their unique needs and pushing to get help when they need it** (e.g. special help to stop them bullying or abusing others and manage their own behaviour).
- **Showing respect for others** (i.e. those who model and promote positive behaviour).
- **Teaching them to do things for themselves and for others** (to build a sense of achievement and confidence, encourage a 'can do' attitude and motivate them to help others).
- **Always being there** (to give emotional and practical support, especially during change).
- **Stability, security and continuity** (providing a strong and lasting attachment to their child, that builds trust, confidence and self esteem and the building blocks of good relationships with others).
- **Warmth, love and affection** (so they feel cared for and in turn can care for and want to give back to others).
- **Encouragement, expectation and praise** (motivation and reward for showing respect and good behaviour towards others).
- **Choice to affect what happens to them, to take risks and to make decisions for themselves** (e.g. about how to behave with others and to learn through their own mistakes; to choose their identity, attitudes and moral beliefs and how they will contribute to society).

- **Local and national resources; public and social welfare services** (e.g. local community resources and organisations; advocacy, campaigning, social welfare and environmental groups, law enforcement agencies etc).
- **Supportive laws and government** (to enforce and police legal and social rights and responsibilities, school behaviour policies etc).
- **Support from family, friends and other people** (to reinforce, model and support good behaviour).
- **School, college and university** (to provide a place for social learning and development).

## **Achieve Economic Wellbeing –**

**so that they engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school; are ready for employment; live in a decent home and sustainable community; have access to transport and material goods and live in a household free from low income.**

- **Knowledge, advice and guidance** (help to find further and higher education opportunities, fill out applications, prepare for interviews, how to behave in the workplace etc).
- **Recognising their unique needs and pushing to get help when they need it** (e.g. unmet need for stability, housing, financial support or for emotional and behavioural difficulties that undermine education and employment).
- **Stability, security and continuity** (in where they live, and providing emotional and practical support to pursue higher/further education and find employment).
- **Encouragement, expectation and praise** (to motivate them to reach their full potential and never give up).
- **Always being there** (to give advice, reassurance and practical and emotional support to become independent).
- **Talking, listening and respect** (to help them think through what they want to do, explore ambitions, ask for help, and build confidence).
- **Modelling good behaviour** (parents being in employment themselves, if possible).
- **Showing respect for others** (for employers, educators etc).
- **Opportunities to experience new challenges, places and people** (e.g. work experience, placements and voluntary work to increase confidence and workplace skills and experience).
- **Encouraging positive relationships with others** (to build teamwork skills, behave appropriately in the workplace and build good relationships with neighbours and in the local community).
- **Choice to affect what happens to them, to take risks and to make decisions for themselves** (what they want to do in life, try things out and learn through their experiences).

- **Teaching them to do things for themselves and for others** (to help their child find and maintain further/higher education and employment, and prepare them with the practical, social and emotional skills and information to look after themselves, find employment and accommodation and live independently).
  - **Support when leaving home and a safety net to return to** (the chance to delay leaving home until ready, giving emotional, financial and practical support, and reassurance during a gradual transition to independent living with the choice to return home and try again).
  - **Support from wider family, friends and others** (e.g. to help find employment and live independently, provide temporary accommodation and a social network to prevent isolation and loneliness).
  - **Enough money** (e.g. to afford accommodation, travel, buy clothes, food, pay bills, enjoy leisure and social activities).
  - **Comfortable and safe housing** (with goods, furnishings and appliances to keep warm and dry, cook food and be protected from danger).
  - **Local and national resources; public and welfare services** (transport, housing and leisure facilities, local commerce, entitlement to welfare benefits and financial support for further/higher education etc).
  - **College and university** (to provide learning and build skills).
  - **Work experience and employment opportunities** (to learn skills and gain employment so children can support themselves financially).
  - **Supportive laws and government** (employment, welfare and further education law and policies).
  - **Healthy and safe environment** (e.g. in an area of low risk to safety and health).
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## Young people's principles of good corporate parenting

Do as much as you can to support our families to prevent us from coming into care. Try to keep our stay in care to a minimum by supporting them to have us back, if that's what's best for us. When you do have to look after us, help us to stay with other brothers and sisters in care and to keep up good relationships with our families.

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Recognise our need to be parented while our parents can't look after us and your responsibility to fill this gap. So know us, our experiences and special needs and take great care of our emotional and social wellbeing, not just the physical. Show us that you really care. Having long term, warm and trusting, relationships with the people close to us is the key to everything. Do all you can to nurture this. And make sure those of us who seem OK get just as much attention as the ones who don't – passiveness can signal deep inner needs just as much as troublesome acting out.

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Forge effective partnerships to meet all our needs.

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Put us first before the convenience of the system.

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Make sure the people you choose to care for us are committed and have all the right qualities and motives, just as you would if you were choosing someone to look after your own children. Sometimes the person's character is more important than their qualifications.

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Look after the people who care for us so that they want to stay for the long haul. Make it worth their while to do their best. Give them the time, skills and resources to be able to devote enough attention to us, and give them the power to make the right decisions on our behalf. Motivate them to fight for us – to get us the best out of life in care. Don't put barriers in their way. And don't be afraid to take risks – carers should be allowed to get things wrong, and be given the leeway and support to do things their way. That's natural parenting.

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Keep down the number of professionals and carers in our lives, and make sure there is always someone special to be there for us, no matter what. Anticipate and plan ahead to avoid unnecessary disruption.

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Don't discourage working parents from fostering and keeping a job, as this provides a positive role model.

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Accept and value us, whoever we are. Don't judge us by our past – the future holds new beginnings and bright possibilities.

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Listen and talk to us – respect our views and feelings and give us real power to make things better in our lives.

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Trust us and nurture our trust in you. Staff and carers shouldn't make promises that they can't keep. Keep our confidences or tell us when you can't and strive to share the right information between your workers and other agencies, preferably with our consent. Help us to gain and re-gain others' trust if we don't keep our own end of the bargain. That's part of growing up and becoming responsible.

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Help our carers and professionals to "be the grown-up" and set consistent and reasonable rules, which will need to change as we grow and develop. Support them to say 'no' when they think it's the right thing to do and to tell us why. Overreacting by using heavy-handed discipline that will cast a shadow on our future prospects is counterproductive.

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Recognise our unique needs and talents and ask yourself how we can be supported to reach our full potential. Encourage us to aim high and expect the best from us. Ceilings should not be placed above us when we are still developing and finding out what we want and can achieve. By giving us the very best support you won't set us up to fail.

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Make us feel good about ourselves by showing you are proud of us and what we have achieved. Help us to be confident and to know and be proud of who we are. Always try to imagine how what you plan will make us feel. Don't mark us apart or make us stand out from other children and young people – we just want to feel normal.

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Gradually prepare us for adulthood by giving us the practical, social and emotional skills and opportunities for a successful life. Give us a safety net on our journey – we should be allowed to make mistakes, come back to you, and learn from our experiences.

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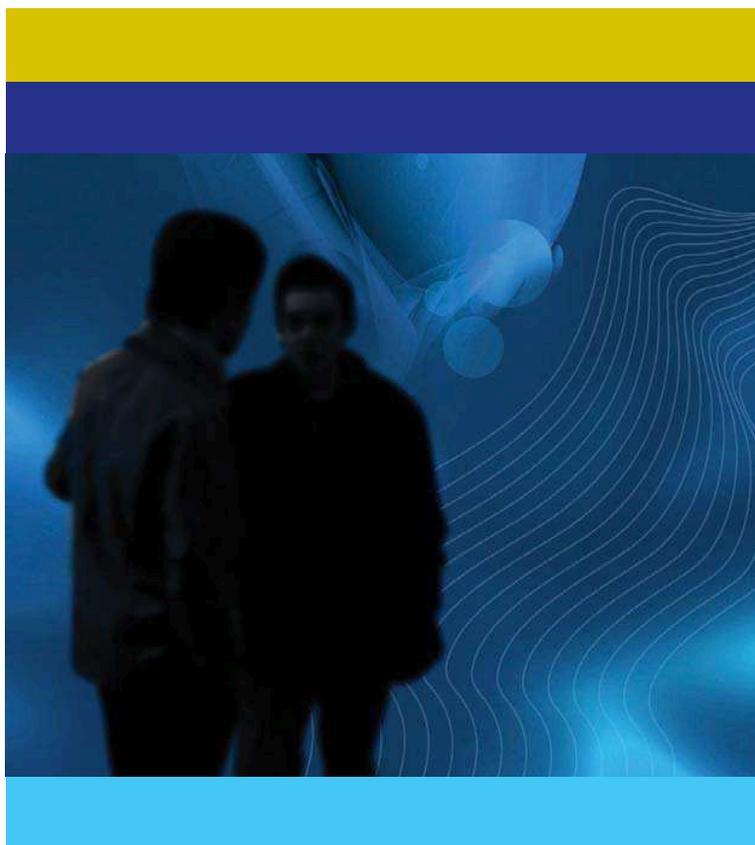
Give us second chances. Third, fourth, fifth ... would you ever give up on your own children?

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## References and notes

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what makes the  
**difference**  
Project for children in care and care leavers

**With Rainer as Lead Partner**

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