

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

My name is J... W..., I am the recently appointed Executive Director of TAG (Transforming a Generation), part of Ethical Skills and Training. I'm speaking to you because E... B... is unable to be here today but, happily, it gives me the opportunity to talk not just about EST but TAG as well. We have plans for the coming year that we hope will go a long way to 'plugging the gap' and I will be speaking about these shortly.

This week the CBI and EDI released their Education and Skills Survey for 2011, 'Building for Growth'. It provides a snapshot of employer views on young people's skills and readiness for work and some welcome enthusiasm for apprenticeships, training and partnership working with schools.

So what does the CBI report and our knowledge from the front-line tell us about how to plug the gap for young people and those who are 'under-skilled' but in work to help them find a path to fulfilling and productive lives?

The CBI report tells us that 55% of the employers surveyed are already involved in providing apprenticeships and 17% are planning to become involved over the next few years.

Employers are recognising that there is an immense value in contributing to the work required to create a sustainable workforce.

They have learned that their businesses benefit from supporting apprentices, that they are building workforce loyalty and can help learners to develop the skills critical to their own and the young person's future success.

We must share this message and help employers to share their own successes with other businesses so that the enthusiasm for working with apprentices can be spread and we can reach the 45% of businesses that haven't managed to get involved so far.

If we do this effectively, we will create the opportunities that vulnerable young people need: training, a job and the support to succeed.

We are still facing some uphill battles and if we are to champion the cause Page | 2 of apprenticeships, we need to overcome the stigma attached to vocational learning and non-academic pathways. It cannot be right that young people exploring vocational learning options, receive a message that this is somehow 'second best' or even a 'failure'.

Once again, to overcome this we must tell stories about the success of apprenticeships.

To have those good news stories, we must be delivering high quality apprenticeships and learning opportunities with great support for employers *and* learners.

This means creating apprenticeships with learner support and mentoring - our apprenticeship plus model - and now, with TAG, creating pre-apprenticeship programmes that involve employers in supporting vulnerable learners, helping them *prepare* for full, supported apprenticeships. We're creating a quality-focused model.

We need this across the sector.

The CBI report very clearly shows that even though employers have concerns about young people's literacy and numeracy, they are more concerned about a lack of employability skills in their new employees and some are having to invest in providing training opportunities to address this.

Some people think this is a failure of schooling across the board to provide work-ready young people but, in fact, there is a lot we can celebrate in schools.

Innovations such as Personal Learning and Thinking Skills and Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning are approaches used in many schools up and down the country. They are increasing young people's team-working skills, their ability to function as independent learners and as creative thinkers - exactly the kinds of skills employers crave.

In addition there are some strong national organisations who are working on curriculum innovations in this area and partnering with schools to develop programmes. These projects are delivering employability skills to young people in schools and we should collaborate with them to share the learning and ensure these approaches can be applied in schools across

the country as well as contributing to our apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship models.

At the same time, the educational landscape is changing rapidly and with some very mixed messages. We have an emphasis on academic subjects and yet a flourishing and expanding sector of schools providing vocational, creative and enterprise-related education. It all feels a bit confusing, for all of us!

And at the same time, the Wolf report tells us that a greater focus on vocational learning is necessary to our economy and the life chances of many of our young people.

Employers tell us that bureaucracy is something they worry about a great deal when it comes to apprenticeships. The CBI report tells us that a fear of bureaucracy is preventing many employers, particularly smaller businesses, from providing apprenticeships.

It must be time to address this. We need to provide high-quality learning without the burden of over-complicated paperwork and systems. This is about providing opportunities to young people and the under-skilled, it is about improving the economic prospects of people across our society. Let's not let process get in the way of some great outcomes!

We also need to ensure that young people are getting the right information to help them make the right choices. I've talked about the stigma attached to vocational learning and apprenticeships but sometimes it is simple ignorance of the facts that gets in the way. It's vital that schools, teachers, careers advisors, youth workers and others who are talking to young people about their options are making sure that clear and correct information is getting across.

There are many paths available for young people and for some of them, an apprenticeship provides the perfect pathway to a successful future. We need to replicate the employment structures of some of our European neighbours, like Germany, where an apprenticeship is seen as a normal route into any number of vocational and professional careers.

So that's a bit about what we know. Now I'd like to talk to you about TAG. We're moving into a new phase. After two years of delivering supported apprenticeships into the fitness industry through Future Jobs Fund, we're expanding our remit to find pathways into jobs for very vulnerable young

people across a range of sectors. It's an ambitious plan but with a clear focus.

We know that there is a cohort of young people out there which is very disadvantaged in the labour market. These young people might be care leavers, young offenders, young people who've been forgotten by their schools or those who have never managed to find the right opportunity to get them on a positive pathway.

They are young people without qualifications who can't get over the threshold of a job. As a consequence they lack the skills, the experiences that will get them there. They lack confidence, self-esteem, resilience.

They need extra help.

TAG will develop courses, opportunities and interventions that will help these young people move towards a full apprenticeship. TAG will 'plug the gap' between young people at foundation learning stage and the opportunity to move into apprenticeship.

We will work with employers to provide work experience opportunities so that young people can build their confidence in preparation for an apprenticeship.

Finally, when young people are in an apprenticeship we will work with our EST colleagues to ensure that we're providing the right kind of support for vulnerable learners.

TAG will also concentrate on delivering what we call Community Plus: building partnerships with schools, employers, local authorities and others concerned with improving employment opportunities for young people at a local level. The CBI report tells us that small businesses are most anxious about providing apprenticeships, we think Community Plus can change that.

Between TAG and EST we are attempting to plug the gap by providing a pathway of support for vulnerable learners and young people who need a bit of extra help.

The work is based on a philosophy of being learner-centred, focused on meeting assessed individual need with high quality, accredited learning and work. We can be alongside young people to help them into a

successful and fulfilling life by providing them with the opportunities and experiences they need to progress, at their own speed. Page | 5

So we have some work to do:

- Encouraging more employers to provide apprenticeship opportunities and to get involved in pre-apprenticeship programmes for young people.
- Supporting schools and educationalists in delivering curricula that provide young people with employability skills.
- Sharing the success stories so that more young people, and those that advise them, understand that apprenticeships can offer a great pathway into work.
- Ensuring that we provide learner-centred quality apprenticeship opportunities.

And, critically, creating the pathways that ensure that success in work can be available to all young people, regardless of the challenges they have faced.

Thank you

Corporate Parenting Speech 29th October 2009

This has been a great afternoon, thank you to all our speakers so far.

We've heard a few views of Corporate parenting this afternoon and I'm here to give you the NCAS perspective, based on our work with young people and attempting to illustrate a model that we think could help Corporate Parenting work within local authorities - bringing care and parenting from the local authority right to the young person.

When we work with young people to establish what they want and need, they give us some very clear messages. The important things: feeling cared for, feeling important to someone, the special relationships that are formed and through which the young person feels supported to take risks, the chance to have a second chance when things go wrong and to feel some sense of control; a say and self-efficacy - to see that you are making decisions and to see their impact.

Positive relationships, feeling cared for, having some control.

We know that these are the things that make all of us feel good, secure and useful in the world. We should not be surprised that this is what young people in and from care require of us.

The question is how does a local authority, a corporate body, parent a child effectively in this way?

Let's address the practical aspects first.

We would hope that most local authorities will, when you ask them to describe their corporate parenting structures, tell you something about their Corporate Parenting Strategy. They will tell you about their Corporate Parenting Panel or Steering Group, they might even talk first about their Pledge to children and young people in and from care and their Children in Care Council.

We hope they do and these are critical to a shared sense of responsibility for children and young people in and from care. Those local authorities who are starting to tackle corporate parenting well are doing so from this starting point; making the argument that all parts of the organisation have a responsibility to the children and young people they have chosen to take into care.

Organisationally this can mean developing a strategy that links different departments' targets and objectives, alongside the Every Child Matters outcomes and gives a clear steer to the whole authority regarding their shared endeavour. Local authorities that are doing this well will also have a strong corporate parenting panel with good support from elected members.

The role of the Lead Member is vital to the engagement of elected members. A strong lead member with an enthusiasm for corporate parenting and a good partnership

relationship with officers can work wonders, constantly keeping children in and from care in focus for other members as well as keeping the agenda at a member level across the whole authority. I've met some fierce supporters of Corporate Parenting at Lead Member level - vociferous, persuasive, happily antagonistic and deeply committed to the young people they serve.

A committed and vocal lead member is great at keeping the agenda front and centre and is a vital ally for officers who are working to improve outcomes. Many also fully embrace their role as corporate parents and, in their own words let's be honest here - Corporate Grand Parents.

Many local authorities have been developing their Pledges and Children in Care Councils over the last few months. We know that some authorities have taken some very quick routes to establishing their pledges - single day meetings, no process, just consultation, no interaction with staff or members. Others have tackled the process well and taken their time to develop pledges informed by work with young people and shared with staff, carers and elected members.

Similarly, the development of children in care councils across the country has been diverse. Some authorities have hardly started to draw young people together or have latched the council responsibilities onto existing fora without thought for how young people's involvement will shape the direction of work for children in care or even provide learning opportunities to the young people involved.

Some good examples: In Warwickshire the Children in Care Council is embedded in the authority's political structures

and regularly attended by the Lead Member and the Director of Children's Services. In Norfolk, the Children in Care Council uses twitter to keep young people and others up to date on its work. In the summer they used twitter updates to provide a running commentary of their visit to the National Stocktake meeting in London. It's a recommended read, insightful, thoughtful and in parts hilarious.

Where Pledges and Children in Care Councils work well it is because they are fully secured into the political structure with the support of officers and members, enabling children and young people the opportunity to inform, influence and contribute while learning new and valuable skills.

The development of these structures reflects the success of the Care Matters agenda, the general Corporate Parenting message is getting through: A shared responsibility of the whole local authority to care for and parent a group of children and young people who are experiencing a gap in their parenting and care and a commitment to consider them as we would our own children, including providing them with a wealth of opportunities that only an organisation can and which will help secure their future.

Those opportunities must exploit to the full the resources that the authority has at its disposal. At the moment, as part of FromCare2Work our employability project, local authorities are signing up, mapping and workplanning as whole entities to develop structures to support the employment chances of care leavers. The process ensures that the Director of Children's Services is signed up, offering opportunities in her or his office, working to promote the

project to other directors in the authority, keeping tabs on progress and being the champion.

These authorities are being taken down a road where their shared work on employability is making them better corporate parents, addressing the specific needs of the young people they care for, forcing them to consider how they work collaboratively to improve outcomes across the authority.

However there is more and this is where we set out a challenge to you and to ourselves to extend our thinking and push some boundaries. The lessons and messages from What Makes the Difference were clear and led us to develop our model of Corporate Parenting which we published in our pack at the end of the project and which was informed in no small part by the work Sharn and Jason described earlier.

Our model talked about that overarching message of shared responsibility across the whole authority, but that at the heart of that model is the child or young person and next to them the person with whom they have the closest relationship - the lead professional.

This could be a carer, a personal adviser, a social worker, a youth worker. It doesn't matter who it is but what they do. For Corporate Parenting really to work, the parenting has to come as an approach from the whole local authority but be embodied by that person closest to the child or young person, empowering the lead professional or carer to be the parent. To achieve this, the authority must trust itself to hand over the parenting responsibility to an individual who is empowered through its own structures and commitment to

corporate parenting. It means reducing bureaucracy and anxiety about risk in order to allow the lead professional to be the parent. Think about the carers and staff in your authority who are there alongside children and young people: How empowered are they to get on with the day-to-day business of parenting? How many decisions are they able to make with the young person without referring up the chain of command?

Now to extend a little further. We have seen the successful implementation of the Virtual Head Teacher model across a number of local authorities, the premise being that an individual sitting within senior management in an authority should be burdened with only a single objective: the improvement of educational outcomes for children in care.

Where this has worked well, the virtual head has been able to move freely about the structures of the authority, with authority, to ask questions about attainment, provision, support and extension for children and young people and then work to create solutions - either by leading the problem solving or exerting pressure and influence in the right places.

The early success has been clear, the recent evaluation identifies improvements in attainment in many authorities, in Liverpool the percentage of children in care achieving at least one GCSE pass rose by 20% in the first year. This is a model that works, having a senior voice raising the profile of children in care has made a huge difference.

Why not use this model for outcomes generally? We are posing a question: Could a Corporate Parenting Champion

work in the same way to improve outcomes? Not as an advocate or the embodiment of a complaints structure but as a critical friend, a problem solver, the driver and sometimes the anchor of the solution, the person sitting around the table at senior level who is always asking the next question: Is this good enough? What else can we do? What other opportunities can we offer?

And the eternal question, What's Next? Because there is always something else to do, despite the journey we have already made.

This is our original Corporate Parenting Model from the WMTD pack (show slide), and this is where we think the Corporate Parenting Champion could sit (show slide).

We are posing this question and we will take time over the next twelve months to work through our partnerships to explore the issue through our work on Corporate Parenting: the rewriting of the National Leaving Care Standards, the development of our Corporate Parenting Theme work, the production of extended Corporate Parenting training materials and our critical work with other partners.

Those partners include the National Leaving Care Forum which is a partnership of Chairs of regional leaving care fora, Government Office Leads, The Benchmarking Forum and the Government. It meets three times a year to address the bigger issues in transitions from care. Equally important are the young people we work with and they are increasing in number enormously. They are working alongside us and their influence on this agenda will be central.

We ask the question because we are sure that as well as working with in partnership with and offering opportunities to young people, we recognise that sometimes there needs to be another voice in the room when the young people are not there.

And as well as asking the question of ourselves as we develop our work and thinking on Corporate Parenting, we are asking you. Would a Corporate Parenting Champion work? Could it work? What are the barriers and how can we overcome them?

We think it's time for us to consider how we are going to move Corporate Parenting from the structural and procedural to the personal - face to face with children and young people.

Talking About Care - Speaking Notes

Opening Slide 1 - welcome

Good Morning and thank you for having me.

My name is Lucy Sweetman, I'm Senior Projects Manager for the National Care Advisory Service. I'm here today to speak to you about Corporate Parenting.

By way of introduction: Lemn Sissay and I have shared a platform before. Last time was Warwick, where I was born and educated, there were teachers in the audience who knew me when I was fourteen. This time we're in Keighley where my grandfather and mother were born and where I came regularly to visit my grandparents up until they moved away seven years ago.

Slide 2 - Grandad

My grandfather Harold, who's still standing aged 91, was an engineer for Landis Lund, a local company, where he was in charge of their apprenticeship scheme. He still gets letters from the lads, now grown men, whom he taught and mentored and the company still proudly continues its apprenticeship scheme for young people today. He stayed in Keighley with the Home Guard during the war while some of his five brothers served in Europe.

He taught me a lot about what it means to be principled, to have beliefs and to be open to debate and argument. When I was seven, he taught me something for which I will always be grateful. Grandad taught me how to bowl and now, aged 38 - after being told that girls don't play cricket when I was at school - I am captain of

the women's team at my cricket club in Bath. I still phone him up to tell him how many wickets I've taken and how many runs I scored.

cricket slide 3 - picture of the team

Why the potted personal history?

I'm telling you because of what it tells us about parenting, family, roots and identity. That a place can have such resonance, that my memories of it and experiences here were formative and they were built within my family. It tells you how I was parented in many different ways by different generations within my family.

I'm telling you because my experiences here shaped me as much as my life at home, my education, my friendships, my first relationships.

And we're here today to think about the children and young people we care for now, how we parent them and how we influence their futures.

slide 4

NCAS history: what we do: Policy, Projects, funding. Work on care matters.

Slide 5

Policy context - care matters - focus on corporate parenting and participation - high aspirations, acts, guidance (care planning and review is published, transitions guidance being amended, peer-reviewed and released in the early autumn), pilots - staying put popular with new minister but we're waiting to hear detail.

Clear ministerial steer towards high aspirations, some things might start to be called different things.

Slide 6

First of all we need to talk about what's just happened:

New Context, New Govt, new priorities. We need to assess the risk, welcome the continued support for the care planning and transitions guidance, assess how less centralised direction and control can be harnessed to deliver effective parenting to children in and leaving care.

Also don't be scared. Do what you do well and do it more, the responsibility is going to come to you, you're going to be given the free-rein to work together to deliver better services with less money. There are challenges - how do you make sure everyone gets involved? but if you're parenting well, and working collaboratively, keep doing it.

Believe Yoda - sitting around being scared about what's coming won't help, fear will get us nowhere, we have to act and continue to do our best work well.

Believe me when I tell you - I am saying these words out loud for my benefit too! I need to hear it.

Slide 7

What is Corporate Parenting?

Frank Dobson

Shared Responsibility

Legislation and Policy

NCAS model of CP - layered approach, strategic decision-making to empower relationships between carers/staff and young people. Crust to Core.. Which analogy works the best?

Slide 8

What is Corporate parenting II?

What do we do as parents for our own kids? We give them a sense of place and identity. We look after their health and emotional well-being, we help them feel secure. We provide a home where they feel safe and loved, we encourage them to build relationships with their siblings, family and peers and teach them to value themselves and others.

We encourage their talents and abilities, their particular skills and support them as they make choices about what they want to learn and what they want to do with their lives. We tell them that we'll always be there for them no matter what. We give them the benefit of the doubt, pick them up when they hurt, help them when they're in trouble. We give them a second chance, a third, a fourth. We take them back in when things go wrong. We love, nurture, support and parent them for life.

Corporate Parenting should be no different, its primary concern should be about parenting, supporting all aspects of the child or young person's development, focusing on their individual needs and supported by 'Excellent Communication'.

By the way, the communication bit - that's going to be critical. the Govt is going to be expecting you to talk to each other and work collaboratively with each other without them having to tell you to do it.

Slide 9

What does Corporate Parenting mean to me?

Think about your practice, how does your role contribute to the parenting of the children and young people for whom you have responsibility. How are you contributing to parenting?

Slide 10

A New Challenge:

You're not going to be told what to do

The structures that have been developed to support joint working will start to disappear

You will be trusted to work collaboratively and make good strategic decisions about service provision

How to create a service to CYP that is personal to their needs but equitable for all - the issue of having a lack of specificity in guidance eg on leaving care grants, financial support for uni etc.

lack of specificity is about trust: govt wants to trust LAs to get on and deliver the services they know work without intervention, want to trust LAs to use professional judgement, good decisions for young people - means that LAs have to trust their staff and staff have to feel confident in their decision making in relation to cyp.

perhaps staff don't feel confident to do that? why? how can we change that?
critical that staff and young people can develop the relationship that works for them.
staff need to feel they are trusted and that they will be supported if things get tricky.
will they? is this a recipe for no protection? it's certainly an argument against risk-aversion but can we get there?

we think staff should be empowered in relationships with young people. -critical to success.. demos thinks so.. to do this takes Transparency and trust.

Slide 11 - Corporate Parenting and Outcomes

High Aspirations

A Range of Opportunities

Shared Responsibility

A culture of learning

Innovation

Slide 12 - CP and Outcomes

Sharing responsibility for these things - outcomes focused.

Let the relationships work, and create the lines of communication that will make them happen

Slide 13 - Grandmas and egg-sucking

We shouldn't be surprised that high expectations lead to better outcomes

We need to be rigorous

Slide 14 - Capt Picard

Things are only impossible until they're not

Slide 15 - Einstein

the importance of opportunity and its contribution to greater society

Slide 16 - Grandad says be creative!

Inaugural NCAS annual lecture

The first National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) annual lecture took place on 29 October 2009 during Care Leavers' Week. Chaired by national manager John Hill, the event included speakers from the UK and Europe and explored how corporate parenting is understood as a concept and how it should be implemented from central to local government.

The event had an international flavour with contributions from Jason Matthews regional coordinator, who shared his experience of parenting in Poland, a presentation on SOS Kinderdorf's work to improve young people's experience of leaving care across the European Union, and finally Professor Mike Stein who gave the keynote address.

Professor Stein applied his extensive knowledge of care and leaving care to the topic of corporate parenting, questioning the strange paradox of the name itself, and exploring how local authorities can ensure they are focused on the parenting part of the equation. He also gave an international perspective, sharing policy and practice messages from his international research group on leaving care.



(Clockwise from top left): Jason Matthews, John Hill, Lucy Sweetman and Professor Mike Stein addressing the annual lecture audience

Corporate parenting: A challenge

NCAS has been training and assisting local authorities in thinking about corporate parenting and how best to implement it at strategic, operational and personal levels for young people in and leaving care.

The Care Matters agenda has pushed corporate parenting up the care agenda and local authorities must think about what the concept means for children and young people in care.

Many authorities have invested in training for elected members, developed corporate parenting policies and strategies, and have formed strategic groups to ensure a solid corporate parenting message of shared responsibility at all levels is communicated. Where this is working well, authorities are also developing or strengthening mechanisms for children and young people to be involved in service development, delivery and policy discussion through the pledge and children in care councils.

All of these activities reflect the NCAS model of good corporate parenting that was established through What Makes the Difference. That model showed the strategic and operational necessity of structures, policy and young people's involvement. It also made the argument for empowering the relationship between children and young people and the person closest to them,

enabling that person to embody the parenting provided by the local authority.

Corporate parenting solutions

Now we are exploring the next step. Over the last two years we have seen the development of virtual head teachers, established to have an overview of the educational outcomes of children in care within local authorities. They have the power to ask questions and pursue solutions to problems that affect both individuals and the in-care cohort as a whole.

We propose this model is applied to a corporate parenting champion, a person with an overview of young people's outcomes as a whole, not just in relation to education. We think that the champion needs to sit at director level within children's services and without any other portfolio – ensuring they can do their job without the stress of delivering a service themselves.

To read more about our proposal go to www.leavingcare.org/professionals/policy_and_consultations/corporateparenting

What do you think? We're interested in your thoughts. Could a corporate parenting champion work? How would it work in your authority? Let us know: ncas@catch-22.org.uk



The Rt. Hon. Beverley Hughes MP, Minister for Children, Young People and Families, speaking at the launch of leavingcare.org

WMTD recently attended the launch of the White Paper, *Care Matters: Time for Change*. Key messages from our consultation events influences the paper and can be read in full in our summary report "Let's make a difference". To order your copy, contact the project office or visit www.leavingcare.org/professionals/policy/conferences_consultations.

The White Paper is here – 9 out of 10 for Ministers but what happened to your Pledge?

Lucy Sweetman reports on the release of the Care Matters White Paper.

On Thursday 21st June, at the East Wintergardens in Canary Wharf, the Government launched its White Paper for children in care, *Care Matters: Time for Change*. The launch came earlier than expected; ministers were clearly very keen to put the wheels in motion before the change in leadership later in the month. The proposals in the paper were introduced by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Alan Johnson MP and Minister for Children, Young People and Families, Beverley Hughes MP.

The mezzanine at East Wintergardens was filled with professionals and young people who had been involved in the Green Paper consultation and the working groups which examined some of the specific proposals. Some of the young people who attended the launch had also attended the WMTD regional events over the winter.

Time for a Change takes forward some of the proposals that were included in the Green Paper and also sets out the Government's expectations of how local authorities should meet the needs

of children in care in the future.

Fundamentally, the White Paper is at great pains to set out an overarching philosophical base to all of the proposals as well as being clear about how elements of existing legislation and regulations should be used to meet the needs of children in care. The opening chapter on corporate parenting discusses the difficulties children in care and care leavers can have in establishing healthy attachments and developing resilient qualities that studies have shown enable young people to progress positively into adult life. The chapter makes the argument that for children in care to succeed; local authorities must provide services and support young people in ways that enable them to develop attachments and resilience to enhance their future life chances. It also emphasises that the views and feelings of children and young people must be listened to and taken into account and this is repeated throughout the document.

The corporate parenting theme is referred to throughout the chapters as each proposal is set out. There is a common refrain that young people should expect to receive

+ continued over

support that is as close to being parented as is possible and that the responsibility to parent rests with Lead Members and Directors of Children's Services alongside social workers, residential and foster carers in partnership with wider agencies including health, education and the voluntary and private sector.

Crucially the Government has listened to many of the views and messages that came out of our consultation events and they are happy to say so.

Headline proposals from the Green Paper that young people who attended the WTMD regional events had plenty to say about are included. These are:

THE PLEDGE: It is pleasing that the pledge has been included but the proposals are slightly different from the Green Paper and will be set out in detail when regulations and guidance are produced alongside future legislation. The main difference is that the White Paper suggests 'local areas' could have a pledge. This leaves the way open for regional pledges rather than individual local authority pledges. WMTD has concerns this will dilute both young people's effective involvement in the process and the pledges themselves will not be specific enough to each authority and their young people's needs.

However, the White Paper is clear that young people should be involved in the process. At the launch, Beverley Hughes said she felt the subsequent regulations and guidance would be strong enough to ensure local authorities adequately involved young people in the process. WMTD would argue that the opportunity

WMTD is planning two large Care Leavers Week events, with speakers, workshops, stands and more. These events will be completely free and in London on 23 October and Leeds on 25 October. Watch this space!

From October 2007 you can download all WMTD's products at www.leavingcare.org.



Young person at WMTD Care Matters London consultation event.

for young people to be involved in the development of a pledge for their local authority, in partnership with staff, is a crucial part of corporate parenting. It enables young people to feel they have a distinct role to play in deciding what kind of service they need. It also provides the opportunity for young people to develop important skills and greater confidence. Look out for our pledge development tools for local authorities later in the autumn!

CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCILS:

These are mentioned in the chapter on corporate parenting. They are seen as the main conduit of communication between children and young people and Directors of Children's Services and Lead Professionals. Again the full structure for these will come out of future regulations and guidance.

They are mentioned throughout the rest of the White Paper as a reference point for young people's involvement in other aspects of service delivery but the White Paper seems to lack a vision of how they will hold local authorities to account and what degree of power or influence they will have.

PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN ON THE EDGE OF CARE: At the consultation events, young people gave a clear message that they supported the use of as many measures as possible to keep children out of care. The White paper obliges with a range of proposals; the most significant being Family Group Conferencing, which would enable families to care for a child or young person at risk of going into care.

THE EDUCATION PROPOSALS:

The emphasis on educational stability is very strong in the White Paper. The Green Paper proposals on ensuring that young people do not move school in year 10 and 11, £500 for individual educational support, the emphasis on education in care planning with better cooperation between schools and social workers, and the statutory designated teacher role all find a home in the education chapter of the White Paper.

HEALTH: The health proposals in the White Paper are far more extensive than appeared in the Green Paper - after a great deal of concern that the Green Paper did not address health well enough. The result is a robust chapter on health which details greater statutory roles for health providers to meet the needs of children in care as well as highlighting existing legislation that should already be used to ensure a good health service to children in care.

LEISURE: There will be a duty on local authorities to provide a range of opportunities for children in care to access free leisure and sport. Some of the proposals will be subject to the Comprehensive Spending Review.

STAYING IN FOSTER CARE: The White Paper details the pilot that will run to test the feasibility of young people staying in foster care until age 21. In response to the feedback from the consultation, the pilot will also test the level of demand from young people to have the right to stay on in residential care.

WMTD's peer research findings will be launched at our free events, held in London and the North during Care Leavers Week (22-26 October 2007).

ACCESS TO A PA UP TO 25)

Young people who have been in care will have access to a PA up to the age of 25 if they are still in education, want to return to education after a break or need support to enhance basic qualifications achieved whilst in care.

INDEPENDENT VISITORS: Will now be available to all young people in care. they will not have an advocacy role or be called Independent Advocates as was proposed in the Green Paper.

ADVOCACY: Young people will have access to independent advocacy as is already the case.

These are just the highlights of the White Paper and they do show that the Government has listened to views across the board about their original proposals.

If there is a concern it is that the Government hasn't quite absorbed the argument that young people's involvement should be absolutely central to planning and delivery of services and support. WMTD partner authorities have shown the impact of empowerment of young people in local authorities very clearly. Services that work with young people at their heart are improved, successful places with huge enthusiasm for their work and a clear impact on the lives of the young people with whom they work.

Time for a Change seems to be sitting in the language of 'taking into account' and 'listening to' young people's views. This is not empowerment, it is consultation, and it does not have the impact that real involvement can on the lives of young people.

WMTD will continue to make the arguments to Government as they pilot some of their proposals and develop their regulations and guidance. In the meantime our own materials, which we will launch in October 2007 will set out how we see young people being involved in local authorities exhibiting best practice.