

Our promise to our looked after children and young people

National context

The concept of a 'Pledge for Children and Young People Looked After' was first introduced as a proposal in the Government Green Paper Care Matters 2006.

Care Matters: Time for Change' 2007 described the pledge as

*'A simple statement about the support and services that **all** children looked after and those moving into adult life can expect to receive from the Local Authority. Care Matters also recommended that to achieve the best outcome in the development of the pledge, Local Authorities should ensure this is done in participation with young people'*

Guidance on the basic elements that should be included within a pledge includes:

- Giving young people more choices,
- Support and involvement in the decisions affecting their futures
- Ensuring that children's views can be put to those responsible for corporate parenting

Ofsted inspections also require local authorities to provide information about their pledge to children looked after and care leavers and evidence of impact.

Background to the Leeds promise

In Leeds we have worked with young people to agree a set of promises to children and young people in our care.

In 2009 the 'Leeds Promise' was launched after being developed by looked after young people with support from Children's Rights. The term 'Pledge' was replaced by 'Promise' following views expressed by young people that 'no one likes to break a promise'.

In 2013, the 'Leeds Promise' was reviewed and revised by the Have a Voice Council. The Have a Voice Council (children in care council) worked in partnership with members of the Promise Working Group to agree the final wording, format and discussed how the promise could be built into everyday practice. Members of the working group included; Assistant Head of Looked After Children, Head of Childrens Social Work, Residential Manager, Customer Relations Lead, Communications Team and the Voice and Influence Team.

Feedback from young people, led to the revised 'Leeds Promise' being shorter and simpler. Young people were keen to develop one version of the promise so that it could be understood by both younger children and young people. In December 2013 the Have a Voice Council launched their promise card (with magnetic back) aimed at over tens and the accessible poster version of the promise. In November 2014 two different designs of posters and agreements aimed at under 10s were launched alongside four different promise stories for under 5s. In 2019, the Child Health and Disability (CHAD) voice and influence working group consulted with young people with SEND to develop a new accessible version of the promise.

Young people felt very strongly that both actions should be taken if promises were not being met, and social workers should be recognised if they went the extra mile to meet the promises. As a result Steve Walker (Deputy Director of Children's Services at the time) was keen to demonstrate his commitment to the promise and the 'Tell Steve' email address and phone number was introduced. It was agreed that all young people who sent an email /made a call to 'Tell Steve' would receive a response within 48 hours and all contacts are recorded and progress monitored.

In 2020, the Have a Voice Council changed 'Tell Steve' to 'Tell Us, We Care!' This was for a number of reasons including making it more suitable for the long term, and because it has not always been Steve who responds directly, which caused some confusion. Have a Voice Council also fed back that they wanted an option of being able to report a promise being kept well or not being kept by using an online form. This online form and web page www.leeds.gov.uk/OurPromise has now been developed and all looked after children and young people aged 8-17 have been informed of this via the Have a Voice Newsletter that was posted out to them in February 2020.

The Promise – roles and responsibilities

Social workers and their managers

Social workers and their manager are responsible for ensuring children and young people in care understand the promises and are provided with information about the promise in an appropriate format. The promises are in place to ensure children and young people have a clear understanding of the role of the social worker in their lives. The promise posters, agreements and cards act as a contract/agreement between the social worker and the child or young person and should be discussed as part of regular review meetings. Social workers must include their name and mobile number in the space provided on the front of the promise card. They must also inform the child or young person about 'Tell Us, We Care!', explain to them that this is how they can contact someone about the

promises if they feel they are being kept really well or not well, and how to do this (through website, phone or email).

Independent reviewing officers

Since 1st April 2015 IRO's have been asking all children and young people if they are aware of the promise and have been given promise information by their social worker. Data on the number of children and young people who have confirmed that their social worker has shared and discussed the promise with them is included in the children's social work voice and influence six monthly report, presented to the corporate parenting board. In 2023, IRO's reported that 75% of children and young had been given the promise (in one of the different formats) by their current social worker and that they felt it had been explained.

All staff and partner organisations/services

Everyone working with or on behalf of looked after children and young people share the responsibility of making sure there is widespread awareness and understanding of the Leeds promise.

Childrens social work leadership team

- The children and families senior leadership team are responsible for responding to children and young people's 'Tell Us, We Care!' promise contacts.
- When a contact is made by a child or young person, it goes directly to the customer relations team who are experienced in supporting children and young people. The customer relations team contact the child or young person if they need any further information.
- The promise contact is then recorded in a tracker and the Head of Service for Looked After Children either responds directly to the young person or allocates a senior manager who will contact the young person to thank them for their positive feedback or find out more about why they feel promises have not been met.
- We have committed to a 48 hour response time, so every child or young person who makes a promise contact will be contacted by the Head of Service for looked after children or an assigned senior manager within 48 hours of making the initial promise contact (Monday to Friday).
- The Head of Service uses the tracker to review that children and young people are being supported and kept in regular communication and that the issues they have raised are being addressed. The Head of Service reports back to children's service leadership team.

- When a promise contact is closed. The Customer Relations Team contact the child/ young person to gather feedback on their experience and if they felt listened to and heard and happy with the outcome.

Childrens social work services voice and influence report for children and young people

A report is produced by the voice, influence and change team (VIC) every six months and includes updates on promise contacts and complaints made by children and young people who are looked after, and any recurring themes. The issues raised as a result of the data are discussed at senior leadership team meeting, the corporate parenting operational group and the corporate parenting board. For more information about the report contact hannah.lamplugh@leeds.gov.uk.

Guardians of the Promise

The 'guardians' of the promise are the **Have a Voice Council** and **corporate parenting board**, who will be able to challenge, comment or respond to any issues or recommendations identified in the six monthly update report or annual takeover meeting. Members of the Have a Voice Council and Care Leavers Council are also represented on Corporate Parenting Board.

Background to development of the promise resources

Under 5s Promise Story Books

Four different story books have been developed by members of the 0-12 looked after team. Jenny the Jellyfish, Lola the Lion, Dino the Dinosaur and Robbie the Rabbit are all available in book format. The books have been well received by younger children and provide a useful tool to help social workers explain who they are and their job role and introduce the promises.

Under 10s Promise Posters and Agreements

Foster carers and children suggested having a range of brightly coloured posters and certificates that could act as an agreement between the social worker and the child. Suggestions included having space for the child's name and social workers telephone number. A stars design was used for one version of the poster and agreement and an animal design (same characters as under 5s story books) for the other versions. The agreements can also be personalised and include spaces for the child and social worker to include pictures / photos.

Promise Cards for Over 10s

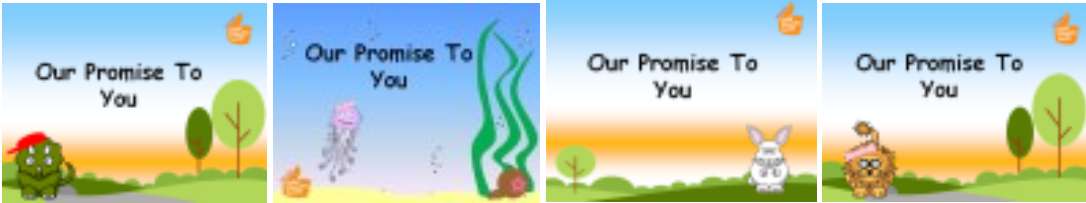

Have a Voice Council designed a credit card sized format for the card for over tens that could fit in a purse/wallet/pocket. There was originally a version that had a magnetic back so it can be attached to a fridge but currently only cards are available.

Accessible Promise Poster

The poster includes boardmaker symbols and was developed by the Child Health and Disability (CHAD) Team in partnership with staff and young people from Rainbow House and Acorn Lodge in Leeds.

Promise Posters – Aimed at Young People and Staff

Promise posters are also available for staff to use to display in different settings to promote and raise awareness of the promise.

What Leeds promise resources are available?	How can I access them?
<p>Promise Story Books (four versions with different characters) aimed at under 5s.</p> 	<p>Copies are available to download in section 4.1 resources and forms Resources and Forms Library (trixonline.co.uk) under Our Promise or booklets are available from Looked After Teams at Kernel House</p>
<p>Promise Agreements and Posters (different designs) aimed at under 10s.</p> 	<p>Copies are available to download in section 4.1 resources and forms Resources and Forms Library (trixonline.co.uk) under Our Promise</p> <p>Staff can also personalise the agreements by adding photos and names before sharing with a child.</p>



Promise Cards – aimed at young people aged 10+

TELL US, WE CARE!
We want you to tell us how we're doing at keeping our promises to you. Good news or bad news, we want to hear it. The first step is always to speak to your social worker, carer or independent reviewing officer (IRO).

You can also go to our website: www.leeds.gov.uk/OurPromise or get in touch by phone: 0113 378 5111 or by email: telluswecare@leeds.gov.uk.

We will get back to you within 48 hours (Mon-Fri) to talk to you about what you want to do next.

OUR PROMISES TO YOU

Me: _____

Tel: _____

If I'm not there, leave a message and I'll get back to you.

Leeds CITY COUNCIL

WE PROMISE to help and support you to stay safe and have a healthy lifestyle

WE PROMISE to involve you in all decisions about your life

WE PROMISE to have high aspirations for you and encourage you to reach your full potential

WE PROMISE to support you throughout your education and to plan for the future

WE PROMISE to listen and make sure you know what will happen next

WE PROMISE to celebrate your achievements

WE PROMISE to make sure you have lots of different people to support you

WE PROMISE to help you have new experiences and develop your own interests

Copies are available to download in section 4.1 resources and forms [Resources and Forms Library \(trixonline.co.uk\)](#) under Our Promise or Promise cards are available to collect from the Looked After Teams at Kernel House

Promise Poster -aimed at children and young people with SEND



Copies are available to download in section 4.1 resources and forms [Resources and Forms Library \(trixonline.co.uk\)](#) under Our Promise

Promise Poster – aimed at staff and young people to be displayed in offices



Our promise to looked after children and young people in Leeds

We promise to:

- 1 help and support you to stay safe and have a healthy lifestyle
- 2 involve you in all decisions about your life
- 3 have high aspirations for you and encourage you to reach your full potential
- 4 support you throughout your education and to plan for the future
- 5 listen and make sure you know what will happen next to celebrate your achievements
- 6 make sure you have lots of different people to support you
- 7 help you have new experiences and develop your own interests

Your social worker should have shared these promises with you and helped you understand them. Speak to them to find out more.

Tell us, we care!

If you think if any of these promises are not being kept, or if they are being kept really well, use any of the below options to share your voice.

Share your voice at:
www.leeds.gov.uk/OurPromise
Or
Email: telluswecare@leeds.gov.uk
Phone: 0113 378 5111

Copies are available to download in section 4.1 resources and forms [Resources and Forms Library \(trixonline.co.uk\)](#) under Our Promise