

# Swindon Borough Council

## Children and Families Service, Values and Principles

### 1. Introduction

The framework within which the Children and Families Service works with children, young people and their families, is underpinned by a range of legislation including, but not limited to:

- Children Acts 1989 and 2004;
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000;
- Care Standards Act 2000;
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Adoption and Children Act 2002;
- Data Protection Act 1998.

The framework also has regard to and is consistent with a range of government guidance, particularly the principles set out in [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).

### 2. Our Vision

Our aim is to co create with families possibilities of change, as early as possible, creating safety and stability for their children both at home and within the community, by promoting healthy lifestyles, building capabilities and strengthening families. Where alternative care is necessary that we seek to provide children with lifelong relationships, by planning early for permanency so that all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential

Our vision for children and families in Swindon is to have a service that:

- Ensures that children are protected from harm and their welfare promoted.
- prioritises the most vulnerable and establish an early help offer including partners and communities
- remains child centred with a whole family team approach
- proactively use our resources and budgets as an investment to help families mobilise their own resources so more children and young people can live at home safely
- works quickly and effectively towards reunification or permanency for those children who must enter care

- creates opportunities for families to be clear about the desired outcomes they are responsible for with our support to keep their children safe, healthy and achieving by building relationships with families to understand what we do and how we do it,.
- helps all vulnerable young people develop personal and social skills to live successfully and independently
- has a workforce that shares in those ambitions and a staffing structure that brings together the right blend of skills and attributes to deliver services in this way.
- Is committed to workforce improvement and creating a learning culture so we can reduce bureaucracy and build professional expertise

### 3. Key Outcomes

This can be summarised under 5 key outcomes for children and young people:

#### **Being healthy**

All children and young people have the right to have their physical and mental health safeguarded and promoted. They also have the right to live a healthy lifestyle.

#### **Being safe**

All children and young people have the right to be safe and secure, protected from harm and neglect, and to live in an environment that enables them to develop to their full physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social potential.

#### **Enjoying and achieving**

All children and young people have the right to the best possible education and training which meets their identified needs and equips them to live full adult lives. They also have the right to time and support to pursue appropriate leisure interests, especially children acting as young carers.

#### **Making a positive contribution**

All children and young people have the right to family life wherever possible and to be supported to take part in community life. They have the right to a continuity of care wherever possible and to develop and preserve their own identities. They also have a right to information and to make choices about their lives, having regard to their age and understanding. Through this they will be enabled to make a positive contribution to the community and to society.

#### **Economic well-being**

All children have the right to live above the poverty threshold and to be equipped with the skills and knowledge that will help them overcome socio-economic disadvantage where necessary.

## 4. Key Principles

Consideration of children's welfare and best interests will always be at the centre of the work that is undertaken

Children and Families Service will work to ensure the above outcomes by working to maintain children within their own families, and facilitating services to support this arrangement, wherever this is possible and consistent with the child's safety and well-being.

Where a child cannot be cared for within his or her immediate family, strenuous efforts will be made to identify potential carers within the wider kinship network of the child who are able and willing to care for the child.

If continuing care within his/her family is not possible every effort will be made to identify suitable alternative carers, reflecting the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background wherever possible and appropriate. Suitable local placements will be identified to achieve educational and social continuity

Children and Families Services will ensure that children who are looked after are placed in approved placements, suitable to meet their needs and that, wherever possible, siblings are placed together. For younger children, they will be placed in a family placement unless there are sound assessed reasons why residential care is the preferred option.

Children and Families Services will ensure that permanence plans are made for all looked after children within 4 months of their becoming looked after and enacted as quickly as possible. If a young person remains in care we will ensure that they are supported when they leave care at least until they are 21 or 24 if in full time education, to give them a positive start to independent living.

Children, their parents and other significant adults will be consulted about plans for their care and these plans will be subject to independent review. Children and Families Services will also consult about the services it provides and ensure that children have access to advocacy services that will assist them in being heard.

## 5. Our Strategy

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The strategy for the Children and Families Service is to harness government policy and funding streams to improve performance, so that we can work with other agencies to ensure better outcomes for every child and his or her family through cost effective systems, structures and partnerships - through targeting services to prevent most children from becoming children in need, whilst concentrating specialist services on children most in need to give them the best possible life chances.