

Engaging all young people



Education, Employment and Training
Strategy
Leicestershire County Council

Contents:

Foreword – The Road to Excellence

What will success look like?

Principles – aspirations, engagement and collective responsibility

Engagement

Overarching Aims

Identification of Target Groups

Background - Understanding the NEET Group

The importance of education and support for children younger than 16

The importance of education, employment, training and support for young people aged 16 and older

More about Vulnerable Groups - Children in Care (Looked after Children)

Actions to reduce and prevent NEET amongst Looked after Children

More about Vulnerable Groups - teenage mothers

More about Vulnerable Groups - young offenders

More about Vulnerable Groups - young people with Special Education Needs

Careers Guidance

Conclusions and Governance

Foreword – The Road to Excellence

Leicestershire County Council believes that all children and young people have the ability to achieve excellence. The Council is committed to high quality evidence-based practice, and strong and effective management oversight. The strategy is set out in the Continuous Improvement Plan 2017-20 (Appendix 1) and includes key focus areas that have direct relevance to this Strategy:

- Consistently good services for children and their families
- Timely and proportionate way to bring about better outcomes
- Enable families, when safe to do so, to successfully parent their children
- Provide good quality care when children need to be looked after
- Robust commissioning and contract compliance

In the last ten years, the Council has invested in careers advice and guidance for 16 to 18 year olds through targeting young people who are most at risk of not participating in education, employment or training (NEET). It has had made a significant impact on many young people's lives, but we continue to be concerned about the most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people including:

- Children in care and those who have left care
- Young parents
- Young people involved in offending
- Young people with Special Education Needs.

The Council is also concerned about older young people. Care Leavers in particular have received targeted support up until the age of 18 years. After this, support is scarce and Care Leavers tell us they feel isolated and sometimes lonely. The Council has a responsibility to Care Leavers beyond the age of 18 and will be working with the Department of Education to understand these responsibilities and to ensure an appropriate offer of support is made up until the age of 25 years.



Leicestershire is the best place to live for children and families

This plan set out our determination to work across departments and agencies to improve the wellbeing and educational outcomes for the most vulnerable young people in Leicestershire by actively and passionately shaping their learning experiences. Creating opportunities will be at the heart of what we do. This is a stubborn challenge for the county which requires specific attention if we are to achieve our vision:

What will success look like?

- Care Leavers who are NEET – 50% (2016-17 performance 55%)
- Care Leavers in Years 12-13 who are NEET - 13% (2016-17 performance 14.6%)
- Teenage Mothers who are NEET – 35% (2016-17 performance 40.8%)
- 80% Of young people involved in offending are in Education Training or employment.
- Young people in Years 12-13 with Special Education Needs who are NEET – 4% (2016-17 performance 4.65%)

Principles – aspirations, engagement and collective responsibility

The strategy sets out a renewed focus to improve their choices of education and training by *enhancing their aspirations and ambitions* for education attainment and engagement in employment. In doing so, the strategy recognises both the need to support those vulnerable young people who are finding it difficult to engage in employment and training and early intervention to support those at risk of experiencing disadvantage in later life.



“This is a photo of me at my graduation... use this photo to encourage Children-in-Care... let them know they can do it,”

Robert (Care Leaver)

Engagement in learning and educational attainment is critical if young people are to make a success of their lives.

Evidence shows that being in education, employment or training between the ages of 16 and 18 is a major predictor of later employment and feeling confident. The law now requires support and advice to Care Leavers up to the age of 25 years. Whilst the guidance in relation to this is still not available, we know that Care Leavers aged 19-25 years feel more isolated and vulnerable because of the withdrawal of services and that this impacts on their ability to engage in EET.

NEET

Not being in education, employment and training is a major predictor of low income, teenage parenthood, depression and poor physical and mental health. And for some older vulnerable young people, such as Care Leavers, vulnerability escalates if there is a 'cliff-edge to support and provision.

The NEET strategy must be about *co-operation*, *co-ordination*, multi-agency and inter- County Council Department working, and *collective accountability*. For children and young people deemed most vulnerable, there is a defined role for early help provision, children's social care, youth offending services, education providers, housing providers and health provision.

Overarching Aims

The overarching aims of the strategy's approach are to target vulnerable groups and

- Stem the flow into NEET for vulnerable learners – prevention rather than cure.
- Raise children's aspirations, self-esteem, confidence and self- belief and ensure those working with them have high aspirations for, and high expectations of them.
- Have a system-wide focus on ambitions for vulnerable young people, and ownership of the pre- and post-16 EET agenda.

- Position NEET reduction as one of the key indicators for measuring pre- and post-16 systems' success across Social Care, Special Education Needs and Education Quality.

Our strategy needs to address both pre-16 and post-16 areas of education, providing consistent and effective support across all years and phases of education for the most vulnerable children and young people.

Most children and young people will receive the support they need to find out about, engage with and sustain education, employment or training opportunities through education providers. Where additional advice and support is required, education providers will facilitate this.

For vulnerable groups, there needs to be an increased focus on a systemic approach – including harnessing the commitment and passion of foster carers and other carers in promoting general wellbeing and stability in all aspects of the child or young person's life.

Identification of Target Groups

Young people in the following vulnerable groups are significantly more likely to be NEET in Leicestershire than those in the general cohort, although those with special educational needs are statistically less likely to be NEET than those in the other vulnerable groups. The following children and young people represent the target group deemed most vulnerable and are the focus of this strategy:

- i) Looked after Children
- ii) Teenage Parents
- iii) Young Offenders
- iv) Young people with Special Education Needs

Background - Understanding the NEET Group

Leicestershire has a headline figure of 630 (3%) young people between the ages of 16 and 19 who are NEET. This statistic represents a wide range of circumstances. For some young people being NEET is a finite transitional phase, ending in a positive outcome. For others NEET is a symptom of disadvantage and disengagement in earlier years and indicates a lifelong disengagement from actively participating in and benefitting from a relatively prosperous county.

National research by York University suggests that there is a reasonable expectation that one in six young people who are NEET will never secure long-term employment, with the average individual lifetime public finance cost of a young person who is NEET at £56,300 equating to £12 billion across all young people who are NEET. The total associated loss to the economy is just over £22 billion.

The National Audit Office report highlighted three sub groups in the NEET cohort:

- **Open to Learning** - Made the wrong choice; awaiting start date for a more suitable option, short term course/job has come to an end. Likely to re-engage in the short-medium term. Generally low level support needed.
- **Undecided** – Unsure what to do or dissatisfied with the available options. Likely to participate in education or training. Start courses but do not complete them.
- **Sustained NEET** – Unlikely to re-engage in the short term without interventions. Often have negative school experience and low levels of qualifications. Can face multiple barriers to progression into Education Employment or Training (EET).

The strategy presents an analysis of the NEET group, recognising that definition is important to determine where our effort and resources should be targeted. In reality the NEET status represents a dynamic group whilst the overall numbers of NEET remain broadly static month by month, many of the actual individuals within the group are changing at a rapid rate, but that within this there is a core cohort that does not change over time.

The sub groups we know are most likely to be or become NEET are Care Leavers, young carers, young offenders, young parents and young people with learning and/or disabilities.

The importance of education and support for children younger than 16

Wide ranging action is needed across education and wider children's services to improve the educational experience of children most at risk of disaffection and under achievement and of leaving school with few or no qualifications.

For children and young people deemed most vulnerable, there is a defined role for early help provision, children's social care, youth offending services, education providers, housing providers and health provision.

Areas of dependency for the success of this strategy include:

- The provision of strong and sustainable education places
- A passionate and robust Virtual School
- An emotional wellbeing support pathway
- An effective Youth Offending, Children in Care and Care Leavers Service
- Well supported and confident foster carers and parents, who understand the importance of child development and attachment needs.



"I don't think I could do it if it wasn't for my friends," Izzy (learner).

The importance of education, employment, training and support for young people aged 16 and older

Creating opportunities for children and young people are vulnerable and disadvantaged, will be at the heart of what we do. This driving ambition will be evident in individual providers and manifest in our collective working.

Some children, their families or carers will benefit from a holistic, co-ordinated assessment of need so that they receive the support they need, when they need it, through close working relationships with trusted professionals. Other children or young people will require more intensive support, over longer periods through close working relationships with professionals they know and more specialist provision. Cooperation and collaboration will be essential to ensure that the child or young person experiences consistent and tenacious support. The views of the child or young person will inform the support that is offered.

For these vulnerable groups, education providers will be key agencies in identifying risk and alerting other professionals to escalating need. A coordinated, agreed plan will set out the next steps to promote stability and engage with education, employment or training.

Good quality careers advice should continue into post-16 setting, ensuring that the young person, his or her carers and professionals have the knowledge and skills to offer the best support and encouragement.

The local authority will monitor the progress of learners beyond age 16 in order to ensure good progress of individual young people and identify those at risk of becoming NEET. This monitoring will inform the Implementation Plan underpinning this Strategy and will be reviewed annually.

More about Vulnerable Groups - Children in Care (Looked after Children)

The Ofsted report in 2003 “a better education for Looked after Children” highlighted issues which remain pertinent to Looked after Children:

- a) their lives are characterised by instability
- b) they spend too much time out of school
- c) they do not have sufficient help with their education if they fall behind
- d) primary carers are not expected to provide sufficient support and encouragement for learning and development

“Too few care leavers, particularly the most vulnerable, secure a place in further education, employment or training,” Ofsted, Inspection report, 13. Feb 17

Actions to reduce and prevent NEET amongst Looked after Children

- a) *The relationship between the Looked after Children Service and Virtual School is key to bringing about lasting change.* Through case and risk management meetings, managers across these services will identify vulnerable or at risk of Looked After Children and agree the support plan to address needs. For older children, there will be a role for other agencies such as Youth Offending Services and Health provision, to ensure that the young person receives the right support.
- b) *The role of Personal Advisors (PA).* To offering continuity in care and a close relationship that the Care Leaver can rely in during times of turbulence. The PA at time will need to be tenacious in engaging Care Leavers and seeking the best possible support for them. Of these, some will be at greater risk. A panel of professionals will consider these and agree a cross-agency approach to reducing the risk for the young person, which may include addressing offending behaviour, accommodation, integration and friendships, emotional wellbeing, health and education/training. The transition into adulthood given likely delays in the development of emotional and social maturation as the result of experiencing neglect, abuse and disruptions in key relationships has to be a key focus area for PAs.
- c) *The role of the foster carer or carer in improving educational outcomes and attainment should be well defined.* A programme of carer consultation and engagement put in place to enable full 'team' approach to improving outcomes and to ensure that carers feel equipped, both in terms of knowledge and skills, to best support Looked After Children.
- d) *The LA will raise aspirations for Looked after Children and Care Leavers.* The Virtual School will offer them the opportunity to participate in aspirational, education-based activities. Staff and carers will encourage them to engage in these opportunities and help them believe in themselves. The LA will endeavour to provide Looked after Children with opportunities to meet with business mentors and peer mentors who have positives experiences of training and employment.

"Day 2: Today we sailed from the Isle of Wight to Pool... Tonight we are going to learn how to navigate as port of our yachting course... the day has been really fun and we have learnt a lot... It's been awesome," J, K & A - Child in Care, Sailing with Tall Ships and the Virtual School.

- e) *There will be effective support for young people with **emotional resilience and attachment needs - EET and NEET***: The National Minimum Fostering Standard 6 sets out the requirement for foster carers who are able to provide safe, healthy and nurturing environments and sets out the responsibility of the Looked after Child nurse.

However, the LA recognises the complexity of emotional needs resulting from trauma, attachment difficulties and behavioural needs, quite often linked to Emotional Behavioural Disorders. As such, a core offer will be defined including the role of the Virtual School in promoting emotional wellbeing when difficulties are presenting in the school setting, the role of the social worker in helping the child or young person to make sense of their care journey, the role of the supervising social worker in enable the foster carer to best support the child or young person, the role of a commissioned professional service to provide advice to social workers and carers and a therapeutic offer. In addition to this, the relationship with CAMHS regarding children and young people with an underlying mental health need or adoption history needs to be reviewed and agreement reached about how the Strength and Difficulties score for a child and young people, where concerning, will be escalated .

- f) *Children and young people will have **stable placements***- Stability in placement contributes to higher rates of EET. Changes in placement are sometimes planned and under court scrutiny. At other times, the change is in response to an emergency. Improved joint planning between children's social care and education services (including the Virtual School and SENA) is needed to minimise the number of times Looked after Children change home placement or move to a different school (Permanence planning) or where not possible, to ensure there is a well co-ordinated approach.
- g) ***Permanency for children enables them to commit to their carers, schools and communities***- In many cases, this works so well that children progress well without significant intervention and support from their social worker. To this end The Government's 'Staying Put' policy whereby looked-after children are allowed to stay in foster care until the age of 21 needs to be consistently used to promote a sense of stability and well-being.
- h) ***The right advice at the right time***. Reduced engagement with school and, by extension school careers support, means that many Looked after Children and Care Leavers do not currently access sufficient guidance to enable them to make informed decisions about their education:

- *PA's will become a Care Leaver's principle source of support, information and advice where the level of need is not deemed complex-* However, where there are added complexities e.g. related to emotional well-being, offending, pregnancy etc. the plan should be jointly allocated to a PA and specialist advisor (IAG). This would lead to an improvement in provision and content of personal pathway plans.
- *Mandatory training for PA's-* will be devised and delivered by appropriately qualified information, advice and guidance (IAG) professionals. The content of the training for PA's must include how to access information, advice and guidance appropriate to a young person's education needs; career planning using online tools (current and emerging EET opportunities including apprenticeships and traineeships); support for young people through further education and higher education, including financial advice, sources of funding, pastoral support and accommodation; and the impact of emotional well-being on positive outcomes.
- *Specialist advisor role* - It is envisioned that there will be a minimum of one dedicated specialist advisor (IAG) for Care Leavers between the ages of 16-18 and a number of dedicated specialist advisors for those between 18-25 years.
- *Having fallen behind in their education, statutory school careers guidance may be delivered at a time where a Looked after Child is not ready or able to use the information to best effect.* It is essential to ensure children make informed subject choices when they are ready to and so the LA and schools should collaborate on facilitating early individual support/ intervention on IAG which complements and builds on school careers input and acts as catch-up for new entries to care.

More about Vulnerable Groups - teenage parents

Young people who are pregnant or parents are 2.8 times more likely to be NEET for six months or more compared with young people who are not NEET. (Audit Commission, *Against the Odds* 2010). Effective approaches to support teenage parents into Education, Employment or Training (EET) need to tackle

- the underlying issue that led to disengagement
- the practical challenges of having a young child
- the transition into adulthood – delays in the development of emotional and social maturation
-



“At age 5, children of teenage mothers are 4 months behind on spatial ability, 7 months behind on non-verbal ability and 11 months behind on verbal ability,” A framework for supporting teenage mothers and young fathers, Public Health England

Supporting young parents into Education, employment or training will improve their self-confidence, mental health and improve outcomes and the life chances of their child and improved economic wellbeing.

Many of the approaches used to encourage engagement with other NEET groups are valid for teen parents. The key difference is that teen parents often have turbulent lives and encounter additional barriers such as

- access to acceptable convenient and affordable childcare,
- lack of foundation based training where young parents had not had the opportunity to complete formal qualifications
- transport problems
- financial pressures
- appropriate and safe housing.

“Becoming a father can be a positive turning point in confidence and re-engagement with education and training,” A framework for supporting teenage mothers and young fathers

Actions to reduce and prevent NEET amongst teenage parents

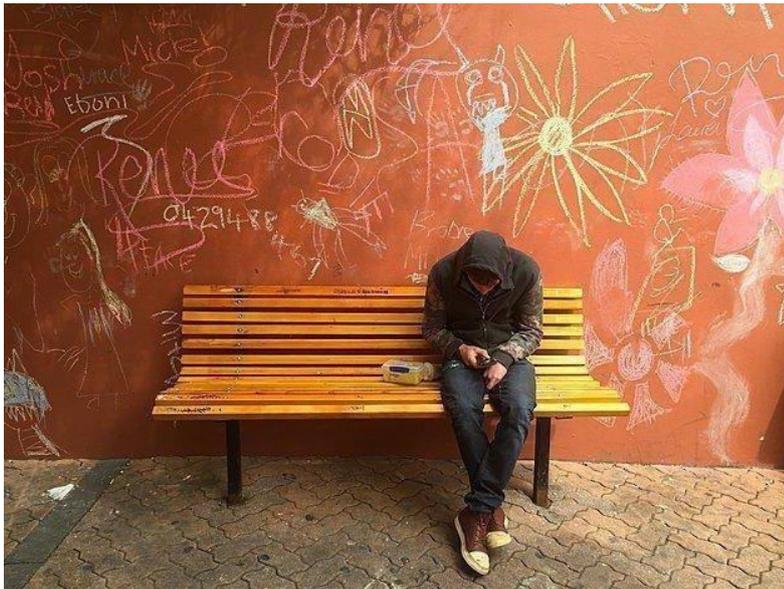
In order to ensure teenage parents are supported into EET, all services which support young parents such as Supporting Leicestershire Families, Social Care and Health need to identify teenage parents as a planning priority, which should give consideration to:

- Work with young parents to identify learning opportunities that enable their engagement through mechanisms such as distance learning, flexible learning and having an accessible childcare provision.
- Work with education providers to consider flexible approaches to engaging young parents in education and training.
- Where appropriate, work in collaboration to offer education and training courses in accessible settings such as Family Centre’s and Children’s Centres.
- Support young parents to access support through their local Children’s Centre. The Pathway Programme is an accredited qualification.
- Encourage workers to uptake opportunities for conversations around aspirations and goals around education, employment and training.

- Using the SOS approach to recognise strengths in networks and support.
- Teenagers with Babies Action Group (TBAG) Meetings are commissioned by Public Health and delivered by Childrens Centres and enable locality teams to consider the individual needs of the young parent.
- Parenting skills sessions and peer support groups can help keep young parents engaged, reduce the feelings of isolation and make it easier for them to re-engage in mainstream provision when they are ready to do so.

More about Vulnerable Groups - young offenders

Young people who are NEET are strongly associated with the risk of offending and re-offending. Many of this group of young people have complex problems which conflict with their ability to engage in Education Training or Employment and as a result there is a need for a holistic approach to working with them to overcome the barriers.



“We have a responsibility to give young people the best start in life... This does not change if a young person breaks the law. We must help them and support to get back on the right track, equipping them with skills, training and self-discipline they need to stop offending and contribute positively to society in adult life,” Chris Grayling, Lord Chancellor

Actions to reduce and prevent NEET amongst young offenders

The key actions to ensure NEET young people at risk of offending and re-offending are re-engaged in Education Employment and Training:

- Early Identification of those young people who are a risk of offending or re-offending. Identification of the barriers to Education Training and Employment which include special education and speech and language needs
- Work with Education Psychology to identify specific education needs
- Work with education providers to ensure that statutory obligations are met and specialist support for learners is in place
- Work with young people to overcome non educational barriers to learning.
- Effective partnerships working with key educational providers
- Work with secure establishments to ensure effect transition to custody and the community in line with the SEND reforms.

More about Vulnerable Groups - young people with Special Education Needs

The NEET levels of Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LLDD) at 6% is significantly below the national average of 14% but it represents between sixty and seventy learners in any given month.

Leicestershire has an extensive level of LLDD provision within the FE, specialist school and Independent Specialist College sectors and well developed transition arrangements between local Schools and the local post-19 education sector ensure learners are on the right course with the right institution.

Actions to reduce and prevent NEET amongst young people with Special Education Needs

The actions are to

- Develop a data analysis of the learners who are consistently NEET
- Collaborative working between SEN, the Disabled Children Service, the IAG provider and local schools
- Work with the FE colleges, Independent Specialist Colleges and the schools to maintain and improve the LLDD provision for learners aged 16 to 19
- Develop employment options through working directly with employers and considering apprenticeship opportunities
- Ensuring that a young person with an EHC Plan who is NEET receives his or her full support entitlement through an annual review of their EHC Plan. The focus of support is to re-engage the young person in education or training as soon as possible. The EHC Plan can only be ceased in accordance with the Special Educational Needs and Disability code of Practice: 0 – 25 (9.199 – 9.210)

Careers Guidance

It is recognised that careers guidance has a key role to play in supporting young people to develop effective career plans and signpost them to provision that meets their needs. The Council commissions information, advice and guidance services for 16 to 18 year olds with a specific remit to keep Leicestershire's NEET below 4% and to target the most vulnerable groups detailed above. For the purposes of this strategy, services will continue to be commissioned but with a reprioritisation of resources for vulnerable learners.

To that end, the provider as a priority will:

- Provide specific advisers to work alongside the Virtual School, Social Care and Youth Offending Service -
- Arrange and deliver training for social workers and advisors for children in care, care leavers, youth offending and early help (teen mothers) to enable them to deliver more effective support
- Develop an easily accessible repository (electronic) of information regarding courses, schemes, pathways, apprenticeships, traineeships etc. for local authority personnel to access in support of young people
- Coordinate and attend multi agency Panels for the most vulnerable NEET learners to address a range of needs to support a sustainable path of education, employment or training.

Conclusions and Governance

There are a range of solutions in place or in development, but more action is needed. Our ambition is to begin to significantly reduce NEET by targeting the most vulnerable groups and to do so in a manner that is collaborative and engaging.

The Head of Service Education Quality and Inclusion will be the nominated senior officer leading on:

- The implementation plans for EET
- Arranging meetings to ensure that the four respective implementation plans are effective (Children in Care and Care Leavers, Youth Offending, SEND and Teenage Mothers),
- Engagement of schools to promote successful transition of young people in school to education, employment or training, and

- Providing reports on delivery to the Senior Management Team and other governance boards.

The Virtual School Head and the Team Manager for the 16+ Team will be the nominated officers leading on the implementation plan for EET for Children in Care, Care Leavers.

The Head of Service for Children in Care will lead on remodelling of the Looked after Children service to establish a dedicated team for Care Leavers and for the performance management of this team (including commitment to the implementation plan for EET).

The Service Manager for the Youth Offending Service will be the nominated officer leading on the implementation plan for EET for young people involved in offending.

The Service Manager for the Disabled Children's Service will be the nominated officer leading on the implementation plan for EET for children and young people with disabilities.

The Service Manager for Early Help Services will be the nominated officer leading on the implementation plan for EET for teenage mothers.

The Special Educational Needs Assessment and Commissioning Service will work with other key agencies to support young people who are EET with an EHC Plan and will co-ordinate the Annual Review of their EHC Plan.



The Road to Excellence

Our vision - Leicestershire is the best place for children and families

What we'll do

Our priorities

- High quality evidence-based practice
- Strong and effective management oversight

Our focus

We will:

- Ensure consistently good services for children and their families
- Engage them in a timely and proportionate way to bring about better outcomes
- Enable families, when safe to do so, to successfully parent their children
- Enable children to live within their family network
- Provide good quality care when children need to be looked after
- Act in a timely way to provide permanence for children who cannot be kept safe by their families
- Robust commissioning and contract compliance

How we'll do it



Embedding excellent practice

- Consistent use of signs of safety model
- Application of our practice framework
- Application of new work standards
- Inclusive practice
- High quality of assessment planning and recording
- Rigorous decision making
- Quality supervision
- Compliant commissioning and contracting



Developing policy and performance

- Review and improve key policy documents
- Effective use of accurate data
- Effective management oversight
- Appropriate caseload size

Taking the right action, at the right time

- Ensure a strong 'front door'
- Achieving permanency for children
- Quality pathway plans
- Good post adoption and therapeutic support
- Young people enjoy education, employment and training
- Help to keep families together

Being a learning organisation

- Quality assurance framework
- Develop progression routes for social workers and managers
- Learning from improvement activity
- Clear communication disseminates learning
- Workforce strategy supports a learning organisation



What success will look like

- Increase in number of school age children who receive specialist support for emotional wellbeing
- Performance indicators evidence improving outcomes for children and young people
- Routine audit shows consistent application of thresholds, improved quality of assessment and care planning and strong management oversight at all stages of a child's journey
- Feedback from children, young people and families evidences quality and positive impact of interventions
- All of the above are clearly influencing service design and delivery
- % of children subject to a repeat child protection plan for a second or subsequent time reduces year-on-year
- Length of time children are subject to a child protection plan reduces year-on-year
- Length of time that children are looked after before a permanency decision reduces year-on-year
- Number of appropriate and proportionate post adoption support packages increases year-on-year
- Number of support packages offered to birth parents increases year-on-year
- Proportion of children in care and care leavers in education, employment or training increases year-on-year
- Improved timeliness from contact to completion of assessment
- % of children remaining in the same placement for three years or more

Four behaviours that underpin everything

Voice

Listening to and responding to what the child and family tell us

Signs of safety

'Doing with' and not 'doing for' or 'doing to'

Outcome focussed

Striving to improve children's and families' lives

Leadership

Everyone is responsible and accountable