

Corporate Parenting in the City of London

Annual Report – April 2024 to September 2025

Safeguarding Sub-Committee, October 2025

1. Introduction and context

- 1.1. This annual report updates on the City of London Corporation's (the City Corporation) role as a corporate parent and the outcomes achieved for children in our care between April 2024 and September 2025. It aligns with the Families in the City Self Evaluation Framework (SEF), follows the 2023/24 Annual Report and sits alongside the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025–2028.
- 1.2. The City Corporation continues to be a corporate parent to children in its care aged 0 to 18 who cannot safely remain with their families, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), children with disabilities, and those who have experienced abuse or neglect. Our responsibilities extend into adulthood, ensuring care leavers have the support they need to transition to independence.
- 1.3. Children's Social Care and Early Help Services were inspected by Ofsted in September 2024 under the ILACS framework and judged 'Outstanding' overall, including 'Outstanding' for Children in Care and Care Leavers. Inspectors praised the City Corporation's personalised approach, manageable caseloads, and culture of ambition and care. This reflects the commitment embedded in our Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025–2028, which strengthens our focus on equity, lifelong support, and participation.

2. The children in our care

- 2.1. At the end of July 2025, the City Corporation was supporting:
 - 4 children in care
 - 47 care leavers
- 2.2. Between September 2024 and August 2025, 22 children came into care, including 14 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). Not all these children remained in our care due to the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). At the end of July 2025, for the first time in several years, all children in care were City of London residents rather than UASC, reflecting the impact of the NTS.

- 2.3. There were no adoptions or private fostering cases in this period, and no children in contact with youth justice services.

3. Corporate Parenting Board (Safeguarding Sub-Committee)

- 3.1. The Safeguarding and SEND Sub-Committee continues to act as the City Corporation's Corporate Parenting Board, meeting four times a year to oversee outcomes for children in care and care leavers. Between April 2024 and September 2025, the Sub-Committee received reports on:
- The Care Leaver Offer (including lifelong offer)
 - Unregulated placement commissioning
 - Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report
 - Virtual School Annual Report
- 3.2. Members have also received enhanced training in corporate parenting and scrutiny, strengthening their role as champions for children and young people.

4. Achievements in 2024–25

- 4.1. During this reporting period, a number of significant achievements were made:
- Launch of the lifelong Care Leaver Offer, extending entitlements beyond age 25, including access to ongoing advice, financial guidance, tenancy support, and community connections beyond statutory entitlement.
 - Virtual School restructure to expand support capacity from January 2025, increasing dedicated staff for post-16 support, improving oversight of apprenticeships and training pathways, and strengthening early intervention to address attendance and attainment issues.

5. Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025–2028

- 5.1. The Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025–2028 sets out a renewed vision: that children in care and care leavers are safe, happy, healthy, ambitious, and feel a sense of belonging. It emphasises lifelong support, anti-racist practice, and tackling disproportionality. Key priorities include strengthening the Care Leaver Offer and expanding participation.
- 5.2. The strategy has been directly shaped by the voices of children in care and care leavers:
- Feedback from the Coram Voice Annual Survey 2025 highlighted both strengths (100% of children in care were happy with their accommodation;

81% of care leavers felt supported by their social worker) and challenges (such as barriers to education, feelings of social isolation, and concerns about accommodation stability).

- A City care leaver reviewed the draft strategy and commented that it “feels personal and caring” and shows “our voices have impact.”
- A young person-friendly version has been produced to ensure accessibility and transparency.

5.3. The strategy sets five strategic priorities:

- i. **Home Stability** – ensuring safe, secure accommodation.
- ii. **Health and Wellbeing** – trauma-informed, culturally responsive support.
- iii. **Education, Employment, and Training** – removing barriers to achievement.
- iv. **Voice of Children and Young People** – ensuring meaningful participation and influence.
- v. **Transition to Independence** – preparing for and supporting independence into adulthood.

5.4. These priorities reflect a "you said, we did" approach, ensuring that feedback from children and young people has directly informed planned actions. Implementation will be monitored quarterly by this Sub-Committee.

6. Children in Care Council (CiCC)

6.1. The CiCC continues to be central to participation. During 2024/25 and 2025/26, activity included:

- A new monthly supper club, co-designed with young people, to reduce isolation and celebrate cultural and religious occasions such as Eid and Christmas.
- 11 supper clubs held, alongside theatre trips, sports activities, and a football tournament involving Virtual Schools across London.
- Translation of materials into Arabic and production of explanatory videos, supporting inclusion for UASC and care leavers with English as a second language.
- Attendance at pan-London events including the Shining Stars celebration, where City of London young people were recognised.

Young people told us:

“The CiCC is always there for us, from day one of coming into care. You help us and take us out to do fun things. We have nice memories with you.” (City care leaver, 2025 Coram survey).

7. Health and wellbeing

- 7.1. Children in care continue to receive timely health assessments. As of July 2025:
- 100% of initial health checks completed
 - 86% of annual health checks up to date
 - 100% of dental checks completed
- 7.2. All children in care had up-to-date immunisations or were in the process of completing booster programmes. No children were recorded with substance misuse concerns.
- 7.3. The City continues to use the Healthy Smiles referral route to secure NHS dental care, with private provision funded where mental health was affected by dental needs.

8. Safeguarding our children

- 8.1. All children in care and care leavers are allocated a qualified social worker. At the end of Q1 2025/26, no children were missing from placements.

Ofsted (Nov 2024) noted:

“Children who are in the care of the City of London receive an outstanding service that significantly improves their life experiences.”

- 8.2. The City Corporation continues to work closely with the Police through scrutiny of protection notices and the refreshed MACE forum to respond to risks of exploitation and youth violence where these affect children in care and care leavers.

9. Education and employment

- 9.1. The Virtual School supported 47 care leavers and 9 children in care (EY–KS5) during 2024/25. Attendance for children in care was: Autumn 94%, Spring 79% (reflecting reduced attendance for one child), Summer 91%. Reception–Y11 attendance for children in care was 99%.

- 9.2. Enrichment included forest school, oracy projects, apprenticeships, and London Careers Festival sessions. Four apprentices joined the virtual school through a partnership with Partnership for Young London and Adult Education and Skills.

One care leaver shared:

"I enjoyed doing the business admin for the holiday programme. It was rewarding seeing the children enjoy themselves and all the parents were super positive."
(Virtual School apprentice, 2025)

10. Case planning and permanency

- 10.1. 100% of pathway plans for children in care and care leavers were completed within statutory timescales. Permanency planning remains strong, with oversight by senior management.

11. Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service

- 11.1. The IRO conducted 24 reviews in 2024/25, with 100% held within statutory timescales. Children are supported to attend their reviews, and the hybrid model continues based on their preferences. The IRO service has contributed to improvements in statutory care plans and extra tuition access.

12. Accommodation

- 12.1. At July 2025, 47 care leavers were supported, all but one in suitable accommodation (one young person on remand in prison, with support continuing).
- 12.2. The Sufficiency Strategy 2024–27 guides placement commissioning through the commissioning alliance CarePlace portal. The City Corporation places all children out of borough (as there are no placements within the City of London boundaries), with the majority within 20 miles of the Square Mile. All reviews of commissioned placements include young people's voices.
- 12.3. A new non-payment of rent policy introduced in March 2025 supports care leavers to practice sustaining tenancies. This aligns with the Strategy priority on preparing young people for independence.

13. Areas of development and priorities for the year ahead

13.1. The Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025–2028 sets the direction for the next three years. Priorities include:

- Strengthening the Care Leaver Offer, including tenancy readiness and lifelong support.
- Tackling disproportionality in outcomes for children in care and care leavers, ensuring equity for young people with disabilities, UASC, and those from minoritised backgrounds. This priority is informed by the broader disproportionality audit across children's services, with relevant findings applied to Children in Care and care leavers.
- Expanding participation and ensuring the CiCC continues to grow.
- Reducing NEET numbers through a trauma-informed approach.
- Embedding the quality assurance framework and maintaining outstanding practice.

13.2. This quote, taken from Ofsted's 2024 ILACS inspection report, was included by inspectors to illustrate the strength of relationships and support offered to care leavers in the City of London. It reinforces the Outstanding judgment and the importance of sustaining this culture of care as we move forward.

As Ofsted reported in 2024:

"Care leavers experience consistent, secure and stable relationships with workers, who talk about them with affection and care, and help them to make progress and achieve their ambitions." (Ofsted ILACS, 2024)