

City of London Corporation Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025–2028

1. Foreword

2. Introduction

Corporate Parenting is the statutory responsibility of local authorities to act as the "parent" to children in their care, as set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017. It is not just a legal duty but a moral drive to nurture, advocate for, and stand by our children in care and care leavers.

The City of London is home to just under 9,000 residents, with 1,975 children and young people aged 0–25 and 712 aged 0–18 (Census 2021). Most resident children attend one of over 66 different schools outside the City of London. Our Children and Families Service supports a small but complex group, including a high proportion of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). At the end of March 2025, this included 4 children in care and 49 care leavers, with all care leavers in suitable accommodation and 67% (33 out of 49) in education, employment, or training.

In September 2024 Ofsted rated the City of London Corporations Children and Families Services 'Outstanding'. Children's Social Care in the City is delivered through a small, highly skilled, and consistent team that supports a systemic, relationship-based model. This is complemented by a deeply engaged and effective Virtual School. Our integrated approach across education, housing, early help, health, and quality assurance enables us to deliver exceptional outcomes in a highly personalised way. Consistency of social workers is a known strength, regularly highlighted by care leavers, one of whom described their worker as being "like a big sister" (2024-25 Practice Review Feedback). This continuity builds trust, emotional safety, and genuine partnerships with young people.

This strategy builds on that strong foundation. It is not just about improving services—it is about maintaining and protecting the strengths that care leavers and inspectors have praised, while continuing to evolve in response to emerging needs.

The development of this strategy has been directly informed by feedback from children and young people. In 2025, care leavers and children in care shared their experiences through the Annual Survey with Coram Voice, providing both praise and constructive suggestions for improvement. In parallel, quality assurance has been strengthened through six senior leader

visits to care providers in 2024–25, which brought insight into the lived experiences of nearly 40% of our care-experienced population (Quality Assurance of Care Providers Annual Report 2024–25). These insights have been triangulated with social worker feedback, commissioning reviews, and independent practice reviews.

The City of London Corporation is committed to listening and acting, as evidenced by the redesign of housing communication, clearer signposting of mental health support, and enhanced participation opportunities through the Children in Care Council.

Our Pledge to Children in Care

Our pledge is built on what children and young people have told us matters most. Co-produced with the Children in Care Council, it reflects their voices, hopes, and expectations. These promises represent our commitment to being respectful, honest, and reliable corporate parents who do what we say and support each child's journey with integrity.

- We will find you a safe and stable home where you feel secure and listened to.
- You will be involved in decisions that affect you, and we will keep you informed throughout.
- We will support you in your education, health and wellbeing, including registration with a GP and dentist, and help you pursue additional learning and enrichment opportunities.
- We will guide you as you prepare for independence, including accessing housing, furniture, work experience, and voluntary opportunities.
- We will respect your identity and background, never judge you, and support you in doing the things you love—including sport and safe travel.
- We will only share your information with your consent and will always tell you who has access.
- We will respond to you in the way you prefer and make sure we do what we say.
- We will be open, honest, and consistent, and ensure you have regular contact with a social worker and opportunities to attend the Children in Care Council.

The seven Corporate Parenting Principles from the Children and Social Work Act 2017 guide our actions:

- Act in the best interests of children and young people.
- Encourage their health and wellbeing.
- Support relationships that are important to them.
- Support their education and career success.
- Provide safe and stable homes.

- Prepare them for adulthood and independence.
- Listen to their views and help them be heard.

This strategy sets out how we will deliver on these principles through coordinated action across all Corporation departments, partners, and communities.

3. Vision and Values

Our Vision: For every child in our care and leaving our care to feel safe, valued, and supported to reach their full potential.

Values:

- **Respect and Belonging**
Every young person is seen, heard and valued for who they are. We embrace each child's identity, background, and beliefs, and work to create a sense of belonging in everything we do.
- **Stability and Care**
We prioritise stable relationships, reliable adults, and places that can be called home. Our children deserve nothing less than enduring care and emotional security.
- **High Aspirations**
We believe in our young people's potential and will never place limits on what they can achieve.
- **Voice and Empowerment**
Children and care leavers are not just involved — they are central. Their voices shape the decisions that affect them, and their experiences guide how we improve services.
- **Equity and Inclusion**
We tackle inequality, champion fairness and recognise that care-experienced children may face additional barriers. We commit to actively addressing those barriers across all services.

4. Corporate Parenting Responsibilities: What This Means for Members and Officers Across the Corporation

Corporate Parenting is everyone's responsibility. While Children's Social Care leads day-to-day support for children in care and care leavers, the whole City Corporation — across departments, services, and roles — shares the duty to promote their wellbeing, inclusion, and success. This includes both **officers and elected Members**, who have a collective and statutory obligation to act in the best interests of every child in our care.

Being a child in care is now recognised as akin to a protected characteristic at the City of London Corporation, and our updated practice review templates include a focus on anti-racist practice and child voice evaluation. Members play a key role in this work — particularly through their responsibilities on the Community and Children's Services Committee and its Safeguarding and SEND Sub-Committee. They are expected to champion the rights of care-experienced children and young people, scrutinise performance, and ensure their voices are heard at the highest levels. At the heart of this is a single guiding question:

"Would this be good enough for my child?"

Officers in **Housing, Education, HR, Procurement, Cultural Services, Finance, and beyond** all have a role to play in removing barriers and championing opportunities for care-experienced young people. This could mean:

- Priority housing allocations or resolving tenancy issues.
- Ring-fenced apprenticeships or internships for care leavers.
- Making cultural venues, sports programmes, or training more accessible.
- Ensuring internal policies (e.g. data handling, communications, decision-making) reflect the needs and voices of young people in care.

If there are any concerns about the welfare of a child in care, please see the City of London Corporation Safeguarding Policy (NOTE: to be hyperlinked).

INSERT: "What Good Looks Like" Case-study

5. Strategic Priorities

5.1 Home Stability

Children in care need to feel safe and secure in the homes where they live. Stable homes are the foundation of emotional wellbeing, educational success, and long-term resilience.

Strengths and Evidence:

- In the 2025 Coram Voice Annual Survey, 100% of children in care (5 of 5 respondents) said they were happy with both the type and location of their home and felt supported where they live.
- Quality Assurance visits reported that "the accommodation and support being provided to children and young people is of a high standard which meets their needs well."
- Senior leaders conducted six visits in 2024–25, covering 39% of the children in care and care leavers, reinforcing strong oversight and quality assurance.

Our focus for Improvement

We've heard clearly that when homes are stable, young people feel safe, supported and able to focus on their future. Most children in care told us they're happy with both the type and location of their home and feel well supported by those around them. However, some care leavers shared that housing can feel temporary, overcrowded or isolating. In response, we will keep striving for stability of homes and increase the availability of suitable, long-term accommodation that young people are proud to call home.

Actions:

Children in Care
For children in care for more than 12 months we will maintain a care-arrangement stability rate of 85%, where this is in each child's best interests.
Prioritise children living close to their existing communities and support networks whenever possible.
Quality Assurance
Continue six senior leader Quality Assurance visits per year and revisit the Young Inspectors Programme to embed young people in oversight processes.

5.2 Health and Wellbeing

Children and young people in care face distinct health inequalities and emotional challenges, especially those who have experienced trauma. City of London Corporation's health and wellbeing support is trauma-informed and culturally responsive. One aspect of this is providing infectious disease screening on arrival depending on a child's journey to the Square Mile.

Strengths and Evidence:

- 81% (17 of 21) know how to access health services independently (12) or with an adult's help (5).
- 100 % (10 of 10) care leavers registered with a GP; 90 % with a dentist.
- 76% (16 of 21) feel safe in their lives.

(Source: Coram Annual Survey 2025)

Our Focus for Improvement

Young people told us they know how to access health services and feel their needs are usually met — but that emotional wellbeing and feeling safe in their surroundings remain priorities. Some care leavers spoke about challenges with depression, trauma, and adjusting to independent living. We're committed to strengthening early access to mental health support, ensuring advocacy is available in the languages young people need, and continuing to listen to what helps them feel safe, both physically and emotionally.

"I would like someone who checks in with me. There is no one who worries about me."

Care leaver, Annual Survey 2025 with Coram Voice

Actions:

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
Ensure every unaccompanied asylum-seeking child is offered an interpreter-supported advocacy appointment within 72 hours of arriving in our care, followed by ongoing access to an advocate in their chosen language.
Ensure access to culturally competent health and mental health services.
Children in Care & Care Leavers
Ensure that 95% of all initial and review health and dental assessments are completed on time.

Promote emotional wellbeing through access to trauma-informed care, physical activity programmes, and structured mental health support.
Sustain initiatives such as free bus travel, dental access, and education celebrations through strategic use of available local partnerships and resources.
Ensure all young people receive clear signposting to emotional wellbeing and access to systemic family therapy where appropriate.
Care Leavers
Issue all care leavers with their health history.

5.3 Education, Employment, and Training

We believe in the potential of every child and care leaver to thrive through education and meaningful employment. The Virtual School provides stability and ambition, tailoring plans for each young person's strengths and interests. English for Speakers of Other Languages is also provided through our Adult Education Service.

Strengths and Evidence:

- 80% (8 of 10) of full-survey respondents know how to contact the Virtual School; four have already used it.
- The Virtual School was praised for helping with job applications and tuition.

(Source: Coram Annual Survey 2025)

Our Focus for Improvement

We know that education, employment, and training unlock opportunities. Young people praised the support they received from the Virtual School and professionals who believed in them. At the same time, many identified practical barriers to progression — from internet access and funding gaps to language difficulties or disability. We want to ensure no young person is held back by these factors and will work to remove systemic barriers while maintaining high expectations for what everyone can achieve.

“I have barriers when trying to get a job with disability and people judge me over this.”

- Carer Leaver, Annual Survey 2025 with Coram Voice

Actions:

Children in Care
Ensure 100% of Children in Care have high-quality, SMART Personal Education Plans.
Deliver targeted one-to-one tuition and access to enrichment for those needing additional support.
Care Leavers
Reserve at least 10% of all internal apprenticeships for care leavers, with an ambition to grow internship pathways across sectors.
Children in Care/ Care Leavers
Promote awareness of the Virtual School and its role in supporting education and employment.

5.4 Voice of Children and Young People

We are committed to listening to and acting on the views of children and care leavers. They are experts in their own lives, and their experiences must shape the services we deliver.

Strengths and Evidence:

- 50% (5 of 10) have attended the Children in Care Council (Children in Care Council) at least once.
- 6 of 10 young people felt their feedback had been “very much” or “somewhat” acted on.
- 80% (8 of 10) know of the WhatsApp and email group and are using it.

(Source: Coram Annual Survey 2025)

Our Focus for Improvement

Children and care leavers told us they want more chances to be involved, feel heard, and see their feedback acted on. Many knew about the Children in Care Council and how to share their views, but participation in strategic meetings and decision-making remains limited. We'll build on what's working by offering more flexible, inclusive opportunities to engage — from WhatsApp groups to creative methods and targeted outreach. Most of all, we'll continue working to ensure young people feel a genuine sense of belonging in the City of London and in shaping the services that affect them.

Actions:

Children in Care/ Care Leavers
Support the Children in Care Council (Children in Care Council) to meet at least six times annually and ensure the voice of children in care and care leavers is formally presented to elected Members.
Embed a "You Said, We Did" approach to demonstrate impact and build trust.
Involve children and young people directly in the recruitment of staff, co-production of policy, and the design of training.
Expand promotional efforts for Children in Care Council, the Pledge, and feedback platforms such as newsletters and WhatsApp to increase engagement and visibility.

5.5 Transition to Independence

Moving into adulthood is a critical period for care leavers, requiring thoughtful preparation and consistent support. We want every young person to leave care with the skills, resources, and confidence to succeed.

"My social worker has been my social worker all the way through, that makes a real big difference."

Strengths and Evidence:

- 81% (17 of 21) say they now get all the help they need from their Social Worker (Coram Annual Survey 2025).
- The service was praised for managing social worker transitions well and maintaining consistent relationships (Ofsted inspection report, 2024).
- We offer Staying Put arrangements beyond age 18, where needed, to provide continuity and stability — with support potentially extending up to age 25 in some cases.

Our Focus for Improvement

Care leavers told us their Social Workers often go above and beyond, and many feel well supported. But for some, the journey to independence feels overwhelming — particularly when facing housing uncertainty, limited finances, or navigating services alone. We are committed to preparing young people for adulthood early, practically, and consistently. This includes life skills, housing stability, and strong relationships that don't end when they turn 18 or 21. Our ambition is that every young person leaving care enters adulthood feeling ready, supported, and hopeful.

Actions:

Care Leavers
Care leavers over the age of 25 are warmly encouraged to maintain contact with the City of London Corporation. They are welcome to visit the Guildhall and can access support by phone or email via the duty line, which offers signposting and connections to adult education, charities, parenting resources, and other relevant services.
Provide life skills training to all care leavers, including tenancy readiness, financial literacy, and digital skills.
Joint tenancy support with social workers and housing.
Guarantee care leavers priority access to appropriate housing and ensure wraparound support is available during the transition.

Implement senior management oversight for transition planning from age 23 to ensure stability into adulthood.
Explore tailored transition support for care leavers with disabilities and embed disability-inclusive planning in all Pathway Plans.
In response to feedback from care leavers about housing quality and tenancy readiness, we will strengthen post-18 accommodation reviews to ensure all care leavers live in housing that is safe, appropriate, and aligned with their support needs.
Sessions with The Youth Offending Service and attendance at the Children in Care Council are open to Care Leavers.

6. Governance Framework

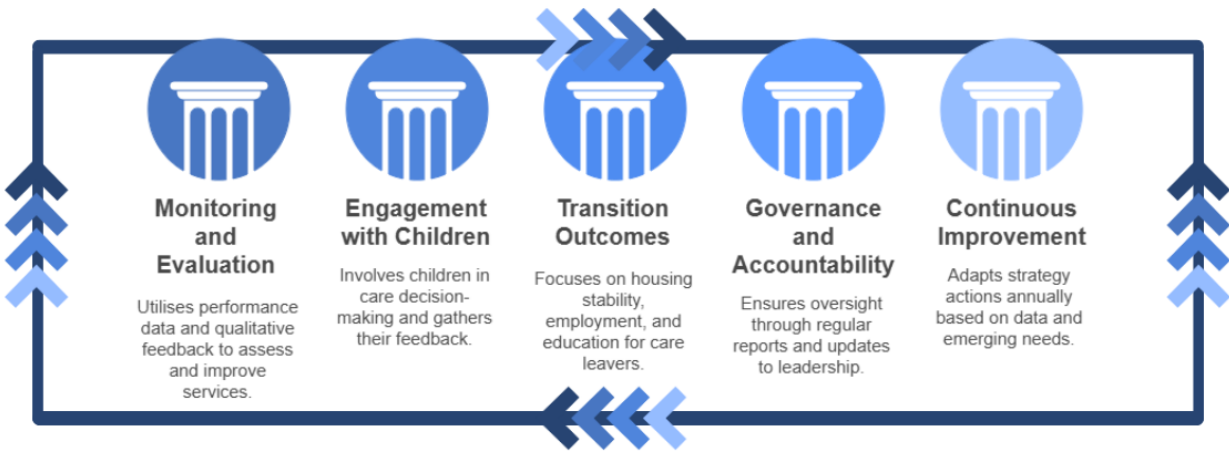
Our governance includes: The Safeguarding and SEND Sub-Committee acts as our Corporate Parenting Board and meets quarterly to provide strategic oversight and ensure that the needs and voices of children in care and care leavers remain central to our planning and service delivery. This sub-committee includes elected Members, senior officers, whilst representatives from health, education, and housing are called upon for specific issues.

The sub-committee will oversee an annual reporting cycle that includes updates to the Community and Children's Services Committee and formal feedback from the Children in Care Council, ensuring transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

The City of London's commitment to excellence is grounded in a strong framework of monitoring, evaluation, and improvement.

Oversight of the Corporate Parenting Strategy



This includes:

Performance Data and Dashboards:

- Quarterly dashboards reviewed by the Safeguarding and SEND Sub-Committee, Achieving Excellence Board (AEB), and senior leadership.
- KPIs include home stability, NEET rates, education attainment, and health assessment compliance (e.g., 100% of children in care health checks completed on time as of March 2025).

Qualitative Feedback:

- Annual surveys with children in care, care leavers, and families.
- For 2024-25, 34 of 39 practice reviews (87 %) were rated Good or Outstanding and 5 (13 %) Required Improvement; none were Inadequate. Most practice reviews are conducted externally through Aidhour.

Participation and Impact Evaluation:

- The Children in Care Council held 25 events in 2024–25, informing policy, training, and pledges, with outputs tracked via a “You Said, We Did” mechanism.
- Monthly NEET and attendance tracking by a multi-agency panel supported targeted interventions, including online tuition and enrichment programmes.

External Assurance and Audit:

- Ofsted rated the City of London Corporation’s Children and Families Service work as “Outstanding” in September 2024.

- Biannual Joint Safeguarding Scrutiny with City of London Police.
- Include external auditors

Continuous Learning:

- A new quality assurance framework was launched in 2024 with monthly practice reviews and enhanced moderation.
- An updated practice review template now includes anti-racist practice and child voice evaluation.

This integrated approach ensures both accountability and a real-time response to emerging challenges and lived experiences.

Engagement with Children and Young People

- We actively involve the Children in Care Council in evaluating success. Their feedback is captured and acted upon through mechanisms like our "You Said, We Did" dashboards.
- Participation in care planning and decision-making is monitored to ensure children and young people have meaningful influence on their care and future.

Transition Outcomes

- We monitor housing stability, employment, and access to education and training for care leavers.
- Annual surveys gather care leavers' satisfaction with the support provided during their transition to adulthood, including key areas like housing, health, and financial independence.

Governance and Accountability

- Quarterly performance reports are submitted to the Safeguarding and SEND sub-committee and Community and Children's Services Committee. This provides Members with a regular opportunity to monitor progress, hold services to account, and advocate for continuous improvement.
- These include updates on home stability, educational outcomes, health assessments, and feedback from young people.

Continuous Improvement

- The strategy is reviewed annually, informed by performance data and lived experience.

- New targets and actions are shaped by gaps identified in delivery and the emerging needs of children and care leavers.

Together, these tools ensure that our Corporate Parenting Strategy remains responsive, inclusive, and focused on outcomes that matter most. An annual review will be published and co-produced with the Children in Care Council.

8. Appendices

- **Appendix A:** Performance Metrics and Targets Table
- **Appendix B:** Corporate Parenting Legislation Summary
- **Appendix C:** [Introduction to the Children in Care Council](#)
- **Appendix D:** Care Leaver Local Offer

APPENDIX A: Performance Metrics and Targets Table

Lead	Metric Area	Indicator	Target / Benchmark
Home Panel	Home Stability	% of homes lasting more than 12 months	85% by 2026
Child in Care Health Services	Health and Dental Checks	Timely completion of health and dental assessments for children in care (based on specific practice requirements in guidance).	95% compliance
Child in Care Health Services, Care Providers & Commissioning Team	Health Access	# of children in care registered with a GP and dentist	100%
Virtual School	Education (children in care)	# SMART Personal Education Plans in place	100%
Virtual School	Education (Care Leavers)	% in Education, Employment or Training (EET)	70%

Corporation Apprenticeships Team	Apprenticeships	% of internal apprenticeships reserved for care leavers	Minimum 10%
Participation Officer	Children in Care Council Participation	# of Children in Care Council meetings per year	Minimum 6, with co-chairing of Board sessions
Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance	Feedback Implementation	# of "You Said, We Did" responses tracked	100%
Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance and Head of Children's Social Care and Early Help	Independent Reviews	% of external reviews rated outstanding/excellent	80% Outstanding or Good
Commissioning, Housing Services and Head of Children's Social Care and Early Help	Housing Stability	% of care leavers in suitable accommodation	100%
Head of Children's Social Care and Early Help, Virtual School, Commissioned Care Providers and Housing	Transition Preparation	Access to life skills, tenancy, digital literacy	Universal provision
Head of Children's Social Care and Early Help, Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance, Head of Virtual School	Governance Reporting	Performance reporting to Corporate Parenting Board & Committee	Quarterly
Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance	Safeguarding Scrutiny	Joint safeguarding scrutiny with City of London Police	Biannual events
Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance and Commissioning	QA Oversight	# of senior leader QA visits to care providers	6 visits annually (minimum)

Head of Children's Social Care and Early Help	Transition Oversight	# of senior management review of care leavers' transition plans age 23+	Target dependent on # of care leavers per year. Embedded in Pathway Plan audit cycle
Participation Officer	Children in Care Council Engagement Reach	# of children in care and care leavers aware of and in receipt of communications about Cicc and other events.	100%