



Tower Hamlets Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report

2023/24

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Introduction from the Children Living in Care Group</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>The children we care for and care experienced young people</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Governance</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Membership</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Raising the game on corporate parenting</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>The role of Foster Carers</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Priority One: Safe and stable homes</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Priority Two: Trusted and strong relationships</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Priority Three: Education and aspirations</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Priority Four: Health and emotional wellbeing</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Priority Five: Co-production and engagement</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Appendix A: Membership list for the Corporate Parenting Board</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Appendix B: Corporate Parenting Board meetings and agendas 2023/24</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Appendix C: Children's Social Care key performance indicator report extract March 2024</i>	<i>35</i>

Foreword

Welcome to the annual report for the Corporate Parenting Board. This report sets out the purpose of the board, how it operates in Tower Hamlets, what has been achieved over the last 12 months and our plans for the future.

The last year has been especially eventful, with the development and launch of our Corporate Parenting Strategy and the council's adoption of 'care experience' as a protected characteristic. These significant pieces of work have helped to secure our vision for the future, clear priorities and a roadmap of how we intend to achieve our objectives. As you will see in this report, notable progress has already been made in delivering against the strategy.

Achievements in 2023/24 include the significantly expanded weekly programme of support and activities at Kitcat Terrace (our hub for care leavers) bringing together education, employment, finance, housing and health related assistance.

We have introduced new guidance on language to improve how we communicate with children and families, and there has been increased participation of children in the development of their care plans to ensure they reflect all their needs, wishes and feelings. We are also incredibly proud that three care-experienced students will be attending Russell Group Universities in 2024, following their Key Stage 5 exams.

Looking ahead, there is great excitement about refurbishment plans for Kitcat Terrace, which will start to bring to life a whole new range of possibilities at a venue which is highly valued by our young people. The Foster Carers Recruitment Hub, a partnership venture with other boroughs, will focus on increasing recruitment and boosting retention. Further joined up work with a partner borough will introduce a new way of carrying out health and emotional wellbeing assessments to strengthen support for children seeking asylum.

None of this work would be possible without the engagement and input of a diverse range of services, partner agencies and other stakeholders. The Corporate Parenting Board is an essential part of how we bring leadership, resources and ideas together. The board consistently looks for ways to strengthen its membership and enhance its ways of working so that we can do even more to support our children to develop, realise their aspirations and thrive.

We hope this report helps to illustrate how we continually strive to be the very best corporate parents and provides inspiration on how you might join us in increasing the opportunities available to our care experienced children and young people.



**Steve Reddy, Corporate
Director Children's Services**



**Councillor Maium Talukdar,
Deputy Mayor and Chair of the
Corporate Parenting Board**

Introduction from the Tower Hamlets Children Living in Care Council

The Corporate Parenting Board gives us the chance to put our views, opinions, and questions directly to the people who lead services and make decisions. By doing this we can contribute to discussions at the board and be part of agreeing the way forward on the things that matter to us.

Representing the views of as many young people as possible is very important and all the Children Living in Care Council (CLICC) Groups play a part in this. We have three groups in Tower Hamlets and each one is for a different age range, so that as many children as possible have the chance to get involved. The groups are supported by the Young Tower Hamlets Service and ahead of every board meeting they work with us to discuss the theme and collect feedback to present to the board.

In 2023/24 young people were involved in some important projects focused on the lives of those with care experience. In early 2023, members of our CLICC Groups, and other children and young people, worked together to develop a set of messages for the Corporate Parenting Strategy. The messages are the central part of the strategy and you can also see them in this annual report on page 10.

In July 2023 the full council met to consider making ‘care experience’ a protected characteristic for Tower Hamlets. This action is about helping to tackle the inequality that people with care experience can face. Three young people presented the report to councillors and spoke about experiences from their lives and the positive difference they thought this measure could make.

We are looking forward to more opportunities to get involved and have our say about the things we care about. Expanding what is on offer for the CLICC Groups and making improvements to Kitcat Terrace (where many of us meet) will help to make this happen.

Thank you for reading this report and we hope it encourages everyone to think about what more they could do to support, encourage and inspire children and young people with care experience.

The children we care for and care experienced young people

Children Looked After

277 children were looked after by the local authority (at end of Mar 2024 – **this was 301 for Mar 2023**)

Under 5	51
5 to 9	36
10 to 15	92
16 to 17	98

- There were 30 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) (at end of Mar 2024 - **this was 37 at Mar 2023**)
- ‘Children Looked After’ long term placement stability 69% (end of Mar 2024 - **this was 48% at Mar 2023**)
- Average no. of placement moves 1.4 (end of Mar 2024 - **this was 1.6 at Mar 2023**)

Accommodation

93% of allocated care experienced young people (17-21) were in suitable accommodation (at end of Mar 2023 - **this was 95% at Mar 2023**)

Care experienced young people

At 31st March 2024 the Through Care Service was working with a cohort of 461 young people, between the ages of 14 – 25 (**this was 457 at Mar 2023**)

Health

93% of ‘Children Looked After’ had an annual health check within 12 months (end Mar 2023 – **this was 82% at Mar 2023**)

93% of ‘Children Looked After’ had an annual dental check within 12 months (end Mar 2023 - **this was 91% at Mar 2023**)

Education, Training and Employment

69% of pupils making expected progress (autumn term 2023/24 - **this was 64% for autumn term 2022/23**)

100% of pupils had a personal education plan meeting during the term (autumn term 2023/24 - **this was 98% for autumn term 2022/23**)

98% of allocated care experienced young people (17 – 25) had a pathway plan (end of Mar 2023 - **this was 95% at Mar 2023**)

77% of allocated care experienced young people (17 - 25) were in employment, education or training (end of Mar 2023 - **this was 77% at Mar 2023**)

The national strategic context

In December 2022 Ofsted announced the introduction of a [new judgement for care experienced young people](#) to the framework for inspecting local authority children's services (ILACS). The new judgement focuses on experiences and progress of care experienced young people.

In February 2023 the government published its implementation strategy and consultation [Stable Homes, Built on Love](#). The strategy responded to the [Independent Review of Children's Social Care](#) (published May 2022) and focused on providing nurturing, stable and loving homes for children in care and care experienced young people.

On 15th December 2023 the government issued the Children's Social Care Reform Statement with a series of publications, including:

- The [National Kinship Care Strategy](#) championing kinship care to set out support for family networks providing loving and stable homes to children
- A [Children's Social Care National Framework](#) to set out the purpose, principles and outcomes that should be achieved in children's social care
- Updates to the [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) guidance which sets out how to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- A [Children's Social Care: Data and Digital Strategy](#) to set out long-term plans to transform data in children's social care.

¹ [Applying corporate parenting principles guidance](#)

Legal Context

The **Children and Social Work Act 2017** (Section 1) sets out seven corporate parenting principles which local authorities must have regard to for children looked after or care experienced young people. In February 2018 the statutory guidance for local authorities **Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care experienced young people**¹ was published.

The guidance puts forward the critical question for local authorities as the corporate parent should be '*would this be good enough for my child*'? They also highlight that children in our care have the same needs – to be loved, cared for and feel safe - as other children.

The corporate parenting principles

In order to thrive, children and young people have certain key needs that good parents generally meet. The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to children in our care and young people, as follows:

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
2. To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings

3. To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
4. To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
6. For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
7. To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Tower Hamlets Better Together Practice Framework

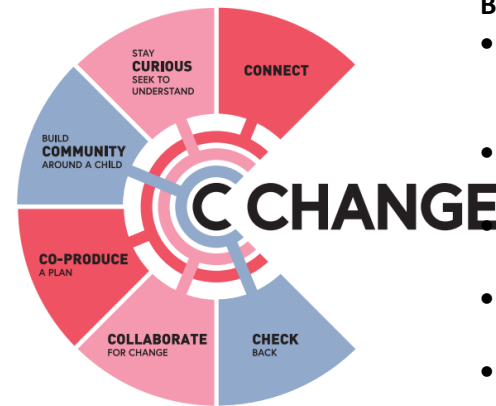
Since 2022, all those working in Tower Hamlets Supporting Families Division including social workers, personal advisors, Independent Reviewing Officers, supervising social workers, those who might supervise family time, and anyone else who works in this part of the Council - have agreed a way of working that puts relationships at the heart of the way we work. The framework recognises how important good, strong relationships are and encourages us to build them with all those we are working with, as well as work to repair them if the need arises. It includes the vision that 'We believe that the best place for children is to be raised within their own families, immediate or wider, wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so'.

In Tower Hamlets we are committed to building relationships and strengthening families by working with people in a compassionate and understanding way. We are ambitious for Tower Hamlets

children and families and endeavour for every child and young person to be healthy, safe and successful.

The framework includes the following behaviours and sets out 6 'Cs' of how we will work with children, families and each other.

The Better Together Framework is very much aligned with the Corporate Parenting Strategy and is woven through this report.



Behaviours we've committed to:

- Be open and honest – do what we say we'll do and explain what happens next.
- Listen to understand – be curious, not judgemental. Value families' experience – work *with* families, don't 'do to' or 'do for' them.
- Work to prevent harm and repair damage – to people and relationships.
- Empower people – giving high support and having high expectations.

Membership of the Corporate Parenting Board



Raising the game on corporate parenting

Tower Hamlets Corporate Parenting Board (CPB)

The Corporate Parenting Board, chaired by the Lead Member (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning) provides strategic oversight to review and drive forward our work with children in our care and care experienced young people, ensuring that our corporate parenting responsibilities are fulfilled. The board meets quarterly and includes representatives from internal council departments and wider multi-agency partners ensuring cross-collaboration and shared decision making.

Alongside the Children Living in Care Council (CLICC), the board provides a forum where children and young people in the care of the council engage directly with senior leaders and decision makers to share their views and raise and address issues.

The diagram on page 5 sets out the membership of the board and a full list is provided at Appendix A. Appendix B provides an overview of the topics covered in CPB meetings during 2023/24.

Development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023-2028

Our corporate parenting strategy was developed in co-production with care experienced children and young people. Through workshops and a film project they explored what mattered most and what makes life good for them.

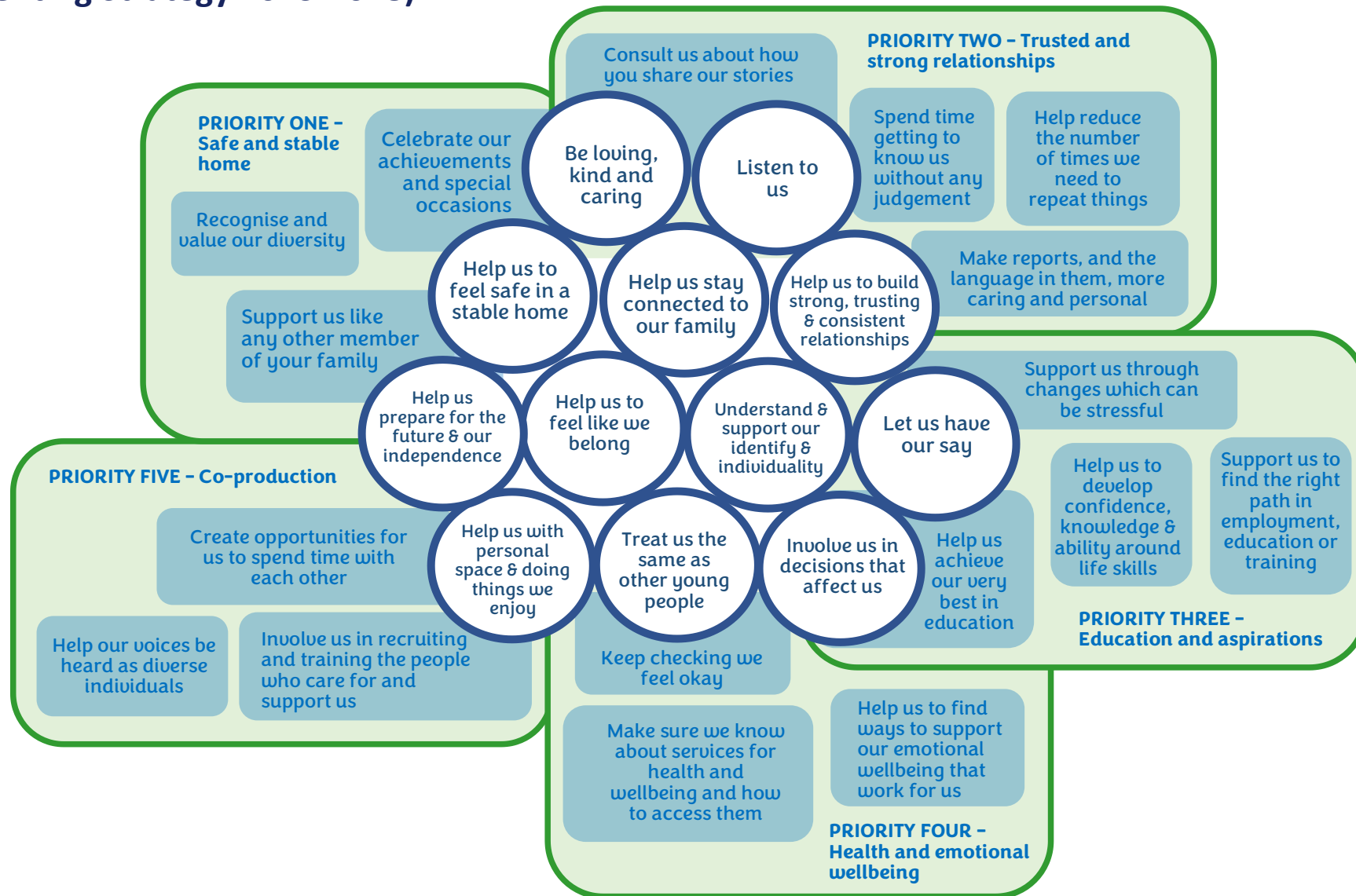
These discussions and engagement activities, alongside a review of all available feedback, resulted in a set of key messages which are the foundation of the strategy, and are central to all our plans for the future. The key messages are shown below (on page 10) and further quotes from our young people (gathered during audit activity) are shown throughout this report.

Alongside the work with our young people, workshops and one to one meetings took place with senior managers, professionals across council services and partner organisations, and wider stakeholders. The [strategy and action plan](#) that emerged from this work was approved by Cabinet in July 2023.

A launch event for the strategy in October 2023 brought together children, carers, council officers and partner agencies. As well as sharing a lunch together some of our young people shared powerful words about their own experiences to help illuminate why measures set out in the strategy are so important. There were also information stalls from a wide range of services and organisations plus play focused activity workshops.

This annual report is structured around the priorities within the strategy and reflects some of the progress made in delivering against its objectives. Implementation will continue to be led by the Corporate Parenting Operational Group, overseen and monitored by the Corporate Parenting Board.

Key messages from care experienced children & young people (from Tower Hamlets Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023-2028)



Visit from National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers

In May 2023 Mark Riddell, the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, visited Tower Hamlets and reviewed our arrangements, service and support for care experienced young people.


We received positive feedback highlighting the sense of ambition and aspiration he encountered, as well as the passion and commitment to our young people. The insight and recommendations from the visit have informed our plans for the future which are being driven forward through the Corporate Parenting Operational Group and reported to the Corporate Parenting Board.

Adopting Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic

In July 2023, the council adopted care experience as a protected characteristic in recognition of the disparity and challenges faced by care-experienced individuals in areas like health, education, housing, employment, and criminal justice.

Three care experienced young people attended the council meeting, sharing insight from their lives and speaking about the difference the measure could make to other people. Our equality guidance, templates and tools have been updated to incorporate this change and work continues on developing further initiatives to support care experienced people.

The Learning Academy who oversee the recruitment of social workers are actively considering how to translate this protected characteristic into the recruitment process.



"I am helped to live more independently . I have basic life skills. I was referred to services 'CAMHS, Sparks to Life' to support me ."

The role of Foster Carers

Tower Hamlets Foster Carers' Association (FCA)

The Tower Hamlets FCA is an independent body which has been in place almost 20 years and works closely with the council, providing feedback on services and offering advice, guidance and support for foster carers.

The TH FCA committee holds monthly meetings in which they are a voice for the carer community in relation to all issues affecting their members. These meetings also provide a forum to advocate and negotiate with the Fostering Service.

Morning and evening meetings of the Foster Carers Support Group are held regularly with co-facilitation from the TH FCA and Fostering Development Team. These sessions provide an opportunity to explore any issues raised, seek a response or resolution and then feedback to all members. The TH FCA also play a crucial role as ambassadors to support and promote recruitment of new foster carers.

FCA Annual General Meeting and Awards Ceremony took place in April 2023. The awards were an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the wonderful achievements that have made a positive difference to the lives of our children (April 2023)

Every year the TH FCA organises inspiring and fun trips and activities for foster carers and children. The following activities took place during 2023:

- Annual Pantomime at the Greenwich Theatre in December 2023
- A trip to the seaside and a day pass to Butlins in Bognor Regis in August 2023
- The TH FCA Summer Party took place in August 2023 at Elmhurst Primary School.

Mockingbird Programme

The Mockingbird model is a way to bring a group of carers together in a similar way to an extended family. The model enables extra support, respite, training and events out for foster carers and benefits for children through fun activities such as sleepovers.

There are three Mockingbird hubs in Tower Hamlets who organise separate activities and provide support to each other's foster children when needed. Activities have included bowling, ice-skating and go-karting. Our third hub was launched in May 2024 and has been focusing their activities on developing relationships amongst satellite carers and the children through coffee mornings and having fun together.

The three hubs celebrated together at a Christmas Party with approximately 100 children and adults attending, including a social worker and some Independent Reviewing Officers. Several children

who had left care attended with family members, as well as a young person who had moved to semi-independence who came with a family member and helped to serve food. This successful event brought everyone together to enjoy activities, games and delicious lunch.

Priority One: Safe and stable homes

Ensuring children feel loved and well cared for in a home that is right for them.

Key achievements in 2023/24

Recruitment of Foster Carers

- Tower Hamlets has increased campaign activities and enquiries in 2023 to 24. Recruitment of foster carers is challenging on a national basis and this is reflected in the borough.
- Despite the difficulties, the percentage of children placed with foster carers directly recruited by the council within local communities has increased. From 61.5% in March 2023 to 66% in Jan 2024.
- A broad range of methods and channels are used to help recruit foster carers throughout the year. This has included information sessions at local libraries, shopping centres, health centres, supermarkets and the Town Hall. Adverts, good news stories and information on fostering have been promoted via the council's communication channels such as social media, e-newsletters, websites and quarterly council paper.

Recruitment highlights out in 2023/24 include:

- School engagement – the service has continued to network with schools and staff have visited 40 schools to share publicity materials and chat with school staff.
- Faith leaders engagement - the service has further developed its connections with faith leaders in Tower Hamlets. Activity has included visits to mosques and churches (including outside of the borough) and ongoing attendance at the Tower Hamlets Inter-Faith Forum.

Training for Foster Carers

- Our training programme for foster carers includes a mixture of in-person and virtual courses to maximise opportunities to access the offer. During the year 2023 to 24 we have run 61 one-day courses and 725 course spaces have been taken up. A wide variety of topics are offered and feedback from carers about the training offer has been very positive and the online learning system has 177 active learners.
- In 2023-24, two 'Introduction to Better Together' training sessions (specifically for foster carers) were delivered for the first time. They were facilitated by the Head of Service for Regulated Service and Resources and the Better Together Lead and were both well attended.

Priority One: Safe and stable home

Key achievements in 2023/24

Training for Fostering Panel members

- In Oct 2023 there was a joint session between Panel Advisors and Social Workers in the Regulated Service and Resources to introduce the 'Better Together Framework' for working together, build relationships and consider how to enhance the experience of panel.

Maintaining and improving stability

- Sometimes a child in our care will experience a move due to a planned change, such as through adoption, reunification, or extended family care. However, there is a great deal of work that is carried out to minimise any disruption to the home a child lives in. The term 'placement stability' can be used to describe activities that focus on helping our children to experience long term, stable living arrangements as much as possible.

Placement Stability Panel

- The panel was introduced in 2023 as an additional measure in helping to ensure children live in a happy and secure home. The panel helps to enhance the support provided to improve stability of the home a child lives in and to tackle any issues which could result in disruption.

The Therapeutic Fostering and Care Team (TFACT),

- The team is led by clinical psychologists, partners closely with Tower Hamlets CAMHS and aims to provide foster carers with therapeutic support. This support can include support around issues that could present a risk to stability.
- TFACT offers individual consultations, direct work, and various training sessions for foster carers. The team also runs a six week course, 'Foundations for Attachment Parenting,' to nurture attachments with children, improve trust in relationships and understand the impact of trauma for children. Our aim is for all Foster Carers to under this training, with over 90 having already done so.

Specialist training within Youth Justice Service

- We aim to support any children in care who have contact with the Youth Justice Service (YJS) with an approach that recognises and understands the potential impacts of their experiences. One of the ways that we do this is through specialist training for professionals. This has included 3-day 'Relational & Developmental Trauma' training which some staff in the Youth Justice Service undertook in 2023.

"...has been my social worker for a while. I can tell her anything and everything and she acts on what I tell her"

Priority One: Safe and stable home

Activity highlights for 2024/25

Foster Carer Recruitment Hub

- Tower Hamlets is jointly working with Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest to create a new recruitment and retention hub as part of a Department for Education initiative.
- There will be 10 hubs running across the country with funding to establish a new regional website, marketing campaign and recruitment of supporting staff. Our hub will be launched in spring/early summer 2024. The aims of the initiative are to:
 - Improve the journey from enquiry to application and approval across clusters of local authorities and establish a pan-local authority approach to fostering recruitment work
 - A recruitment communications campaign to boost the number of quality enquiries and build evidence of effective marketing strategies through a pathfinder campaign.
 - Boost retention by enhancing the offer to new applicants and further development of the Mockingbird model.

A Restorative approach to supporting children to remain living with their carers

- This work concentrates on building strong and trusting relationships and empowering people to successfully manage difficulties when they arise. In 2022 and 2023, two team managers in the Children Looked After Service and one in the Fostering Development Team trained as Restorative Conference Facilitators.
- We are currently considering how we could use a restorative approach to help address conflict and repair relationships when an incident happens that has caused hurt or harm and puts the child's living arrangements at risk.

Development of the Mockingbird Programme

- We are planning to increase the number of Mockingbird Hubs to five by 2025 (see more about the programme on page xxx). With three already in place, this will be a further expansion, offering more opportunities for Foster Carers to benefit from the resilient and caring communities that are created through the hubs.



Experiences of children: safe and stable home

'E' had been living with foster carers from a few months after their birth. Three Family Group Conferences were held with the aim of identifying possible alternative carers from the family. Several family members came forward and undertook assessments looking at whether any of them might be able to care for 'E'.

These assessments had positive outcomes but a parenting assessment was also undertaken with one of 'E's birth parents who was living in another country at the time. This also resulted in a positive outcome.

There were a lot of challenges to navigate as this situation involved a potential international home (placement) for 'E'. Carrying out all the necessary steps included the involvement of an Independent Social Worker, securing legal advice to work through what was required in the countries involved, and helping put what was needed in place for the necessary travel. Throughout all the assessments and processes 'E's welfare and ensuring the right outcomes for them was the absolute priority.

The family network continued to be involved with careful support to work through questions and issues as they arose. Ultimately, through careful planning, and ongoing collaborative working across teams and services, a permanent home within their family was achieved for 'E'.

Priority Two: Trusted and strong relationships

Surrounding children with caring people who work hard to listen, understand and respond to their needs.

Key achievements in 2023/24

Better Quality Care Plans

- The work of Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) includes making sure that all children in our care have a care plan that reflects all their needs and makes sure that their wishes and feelings are heard and considered.
- IROs lead on work around 'Better Quality Care Plans' and have been piloting a program to involve selected children in co-creating their care plans during themed visits before reviews, ensuring their active participation and preparation for these significant meetings.
- They have also introduced a practice of composing their IRO report summaries in age-appropriate language, directly engaging children in understanding the critical decisions regarding their lives.

Practice guidance around language

- The 'Developing our practice around language' working group met throughout 2023 to look at how some guidance could be developed for professionals to 'empower people to write and talk more thoughtfully'.

- The group engaged with the Children Living in Care Council (CLICC) and the Tower Hamlets Young Scrutineers and their input helped to steer the work of the group and the development of the guidance.
- A Supporting Families Division Conference was held in February 2024 focused on language and attended by over 400 staff from the division.
- The Conference launched the Practice Guidance around Language [including a digital version] which has been well received not just within the division but by partners.
- Since the conference there has been a commitment from the Senior Leadership Team, and throughout the organisation, to make some changes which will contribute to us using language in ways that people have told us they prefer. There is a commitment to stop using the term 'Looked After Children (LAC)' to describe children in our care, and to move away from referring to placements, preferring to recognise that these are children's homes.
- Social Workers and Personal Advisors are also encouraged to follow the example set by Independent Reviewing Officers and write their records and plans to the child / care experienced young adult.

Priority Two: Trusted and strong relationships

Key achievements in 2023/24

Joint working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

- Representatives from the Through Care Service and DWP meet on a monthly basis to explore ways that they can offer enhanced support to care experienced young people through closer working.
- This has resulted in piloting of co-location for EET Advisors within a local Jobcentre on a regular basis. This work helps to ensure the support offered is informed by a greater understanding of care experience and responds more effectively to the needs of young people.

Care and Pathway Plans Audit

- Our Care and Pathway Plans aim to promote the child's holistic and safeguarding needs including their welfare, development, permanence, family attachments, emotional well-being, support networks, preparation for independence, and appropriate planning of the transition to adulthood for children in our care.
- This includes ensuring the right and appropriate involvement and supports from partner agencies and community-based services as necessary. The findings from an audit of plans in Summer 2023 highlighted improved collaborative planning and quality of relationships as a strength in the practice of our work.

- The audit also showed increasing evidence of a 'trauma informed approach', which is a strengths-based approach of working that seeks to understand and recognise the existence and many causes of trauma, loss or harm a child or family may have experienced. As well as its potential impact on a child, thereby shaping a non-judgemental, sensitive, and positive response that enables safe and trusting interactions to take place.

Service audit in Spring 2024

- An audit, focused on the 'Children Looked After' and 'Through Care' Service, was carried out in March to April 2024. This audit examines the quality of practice and this cycle looked at topics including the permanency planning, life story work and use of family group conferences.
- Area of good practice identified by the audit included that overall feedback from children, young adults and families showed that they felt supported, considered and that the things that mattered most to them were prioritised. The quality of interventions helped to support the child's ability to connect and build enduring and supportive relationships with their practitioner.

"...always responds to my messages and will call to check in on me for updates on how I am doing...he advocates on my behalf. I feel supported."

Priority Two: Trusted and strong relationships

Activity highlights for 2024/25

Children's participation in Care Plans

- Members of the Independent Reviewing Officer's Team have been involved in producing guidelines and templates for social workers. These are for on-going conversations with children during their statutory visits in-between reviews about different aspects of their care and pathway plans.
- This is aimed at supporting and encouraging children to become involved in writing part or all of their care plan and having some ownership of it. On-going conversations can help to make the care plan a 'living and more meaningful' working document for the child, social worker, foster carer, parent, as well as team managers during supervision. This has already resulted in some children writing their version of their care plan and support is being offered through team meetings to encourage a wider number of social workers to engage in this area of work with the children they are responsible for.
- IRO's have also been linked to individual social work teams to offer support to social workers in writing directly to children, improving the quality of detail in children's care plans, and ensuring that the child's voice is heard, regardless of whether they have participated in writing any element of it or not.

Lifelong Links Service

- The Lifelong Links Service will undertake further work on developing its approach for the future.

- With a vision to 'Empower families and build on their strengths' and a mission to 'Make Lifelong Links available to all the children we care for' the service will set out detailed objectives, strategies and tactics so that there is a clear plan for making this happen.
- As part of the council apprenticeship initiative with care experienced young people (see more details on page 23) a new apprentice has joined the council with the promotion of the service as an important part of their role.
- They are a passionate advocate of the Lifelong Links approach and will continue to inspire and encourage others to embrace the way service can help children living within the care system to build strong family and friend support networks into adulthood. Alongside other members of the team, they have already delivered several information sessions including at an International Conference and the launch of the service in another borough.

Developing our practice around language

- A working group will continue throughout 2024-25 with a commitment to an annual review of the guidance to see how it could be improved.
- We will be working with the Virtual School who are keen to take this learning and apply it to how Personal Education Plans are written. We will be looking for other opportunities to learn from and influence partners, including foster carers in the language we use to write and talk about children in our care and those with care experience.

Experiences of children: trusted and strong relationships

The Lifelong Links Service connects children and young people in care with family, friends and other significant people - creating support networks for the years to come. The two case studies below illustrate the difference the service makes to children's lives.

'C' and 'O' are aged 2 and 4 years old and are awaiting adoption following the unexpected passing of their mother.

Lifelong Links has worked in collaboration with others to ensure that the children, and their potential adopters, have information about their identity, early years and birth family.

Meetings have taken place with other family members and precious materials have been collected, such as pictures and items related to their mother's funeral service. All of this will help the children to become familiar their birth family and to know that they are loved by their wider family and were loved by their mother.

'A' and 'S' are 15-year-old twins who are in the care of Tower Hamlets. Before coming into care they had been prevented from having contact with their mother or maternal family in Bangladesh which led to them reporting feelings of rejection and abandonment.

After significant direct work and planning, Lifelong Links were able to take the children to Bangladesh to meet their mother and aunts, uncles and cousins. These experiences were full of joy and they were able to rebuild relationships and feel a sense of belonging again.

The children now have their mother and extended family back in their lives and are in regular contact. They are more content and happier in their home, no longer feel isolated and have a better sense of their identity.

Priority Three: Education and aspirations

Helping children find out what inspires them, achieve the best possible outcomes and create the future they want.

Key achievements in 2023/24

The Tower Hamlets Virtual School

- In 2022/23, the Virtual School (VS) supported 186 school-aged children with their education, from placement to Personal Education Plan (PEP) creation, building a strong partnership with the physical school, carers, and social workers.
- The VS focuses on educational outcomes, attendance, and engagement of children in our care at Tower Hamlets. Every child is advocated for by a Qualified Teacher (QTS) with significant experience and a track record of enabling progress. This VS teacher is a constant in the child's education journey, maintaining essential continuity to boost attainment, engagement, relationships with adults and peers, while nurturing a love of learning.

Highlights for the VS in the last year have included:

- A new policy regarding Annual Review implementation was put in place to support a smooth transition for pupils with an Education, Health, Care Plan (EHCP). This focused on Key Stage 4 children moving to Key Stage 5 placements, such as college places.

- This work, led by the Virtual School SENCO, was extremely successful and meant every child was in Education, Employment, or Training (EET) on the first day in September. This project now forms part of the National Virtual Heads (NAVSH) research held by Bath Spa University.
- All children in the VS had a Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting in the Autumn 2023 term. This level of high completion is now consistent with an excellent, well-trained network of Designated teachers in our schools. The PEP celebrates the child's achievements, tracks their progress, and sets shared targets which capture aspiration and guide carers' support.
- Three care-experienced students will be attending Russell Group Universities following their excellent Key Stage 5 exams. All three of these children have been in our care since Primary School, and this outcome shows consistent progression through their education journey.

VS Annual Awards (February 2024)

- The VS Awards were held at the Head Office of BT which is a significant partner that supports our schools and children. The night celebrated and honoured the achievements of all our young people, shining a light on their excellence, dedication, and innovation throughout the year. Special guests were award-winning care-experienced speaker Jaz Ampaw-Farr and the rapping maths teacher Christian Foley, alongside an alumnus of the VS.

Priority Three: Education and aspirations

Key achievements in 2023/24

'Give it a Go' Enrichment Programme

'Give it a Go' is an aspirational enrichment programme created with local partners. The aim is to support our care-experienced young people to build social capital by getting involved in activities that build relationships, boost aspiration, develop cooperative working skills, and change the narrative around care to one of possibilities and achievement.

Activities in 2023/24 have included:

- Creation of a 'play in a day' by young people with the Half-moon Theatre.
- A trip to the National Theatre to watch Romeo and Juliet and participate in a behind-the-scenes session and attending a Sadler's Wells production.
- Group activity with West Ham United Foundation, which included a VIP tour of the Stadium.
- Sessions with the University of East London as part of the West Ham Experience.

Council Apprenticeships Initiative

- During 2023/24 the council identified several apprenticeship opportunities within the council, for care experienced young people. Colleagues from the Through Care Service and Supported Employment Team worked together with a group of interested candidates and support them through the necessary steps to consider these roles.

- Additional support was provided by our HR department, including a streamlined recruitment process. A group of care experienced young people undertook employability training and applications were made to apprenticeship posts with some candidates starting their new roles in early 2024.

Education, Employment & Training (EET) Advisors

- Two additional EET Advisors were recruited in August 2023 to increase our support to young people and ensure tailored support is provided to each young person who is 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET). The advisors work closely with the Supported Employment Team, Virtual School, Careers & Social Mobility Team and with major external stakeholders such as the NHS Recruitment Team, Canary Wharf Group and Civil Service, as well as local and national charities.
- Every year the EET Team provides bespoke support for young people to access opportunities and pursue their aspirations. In 2023 four young people were assisted in successfully accessing Civil Service Internships, including within the Crown Prosecution Service, Home Office and Cabinet Office. Other outcomes that the EET team have helped to secure played have included an unconditional offer to study medicine at Bristol University in 2024, and a hospital work placement for a young person aspiring to study medicine.

Priority Three: Education and aspirations

Activity highlights for 2024/25

Virtual School Priorities

- The Virtual School will continue to build its offer to meet the challenges of the extended duties from Government. These include support for Post 16, Children with a Social Worker and those in kinship arrangements. The focus for 2024/25 will be:
 - Monitoring of attendance at post-16.
 - Monitoring of attendance of children who are under Children Protection (CP) orders.
 - Training for Social Work teams and schools supporting the children covered by the extended duties.
 - Providing a PEP where possible via social care and the education provider for children post-16.
 - Exploring options for increasing post 16 engagement, mentoring and support into training education and work.
- The Virtual School will participate in a regional project to create workplace opportunities with London employers (with a 'care and trauma aware' approach) for care experienced young people. The project will be led by the West Ham Foundation and key employers. British Telecom (BT) is offering lead strategic support to the project.

Further development of joint working with the Department of Work and Pensions

- We will continue to pilot co-located working (see Priority 2) and make arrangements with the DWP for their attendance at Kitcat Terrace on Wednesday evenings as part of the evolving programme of support and activities for care experienced young people.

Council Apprenticeships Initiative

- We will review our initiative to identify apprenticeships within the council for care experienced young people with the aim of expanding the services that are involved so that we can increase the opportunities being offered. This will include learning from the experiences of those applied for and who took up apprenticeships in 2023/24 to find out what went well and what could be improved for future candidates.

"...when I first came to London, I didn't know anything. ... supported me with college, and where I live, any problems I ever have"

Experiences of children: education and aspirations

'T' had been placed in stable foster care for an extended period and had excelled in all subjects, achieving outstanding GCSE grades.

During earlier stages of their education, there were delays in identifying T's learning needs. However, with intervention and support from the Virtual School Teacher (VST), an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) was implemented to address T's academic and broader needs.

The VST continued to provide assistance, collaborating with the school and carer to address emerging issues. This involved mediating discussions to determine the most effective strategies for supporting T's learning style and ensuring access to suitable courses aligned with their desired degree and career aspirations. To facilitate T's academic progress, the Virtual School and Children's Social Care covered the costs of one-on-one specialist tuition.

Supported by the Tower Hamlets Special Educational Needs Team, the VST ensured that T's EHCP, managed by another borough, underwent annual reviews to facilitate transition. Regular Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings were conducted until the conclusion of Year 13 and are set to continue beyond T's 18th birthday.

T successfully completed their A-levels with A*, A, and B grades, securing admission to their preferred institution within the Russell Group University



Priority Four: Health and emotional wellbeing

Supporting children, through warm and nurturing care, to stay physically and emotionally healthy.

Key achievements in 2023/24

Health information in the Local Offer for Care Leavers

- The health and wellbeing section of the 'Local Offer for Care Leavers' has been updated, with input from health and children's social care colleagues, including information about the free prescriptions for care leavers initiative.

Emotional wellbeing support for care experienced children

- A Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) representative now attends Wed evening drop-in sessions at Kitcat Terrace for young people. They are providing consultation and signposting for any young person seeking support for their emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- The CAMHS in Children's Social Care Team has joined up with the Running Charity and staff from the Children's Social Care Team to set up a running club for young people which meets weekly at Kitcat Terrace.

Improving awareness and understanding of health assessments

- Work has been undertaken during the year to develop a greater understanding of health assessments amongst children and young people. A TikTok video has been co-produced with them and one of our care experienced young people demonstrates what is involved at an assessment with local professionals. The video aims to explain what the health assessment is and how it can make a positive difference to health and wellbeing.
- Alongside the video a leaflet has been produced so that the information can be promoted and shared through several channels including the 'Know Now' App.

Identifying need at the earliest opportunity

- The use of the 'Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire' (SDQ) has been aligned with the Emotional Wellbeing Screenings carried out by the Tower Hamlets CAMHS in Social Care Team. The team has access to the completed SDQ and integrates it into screening consultations with the social worker. This ensures that any health needs or issues are identified quickly and children do not experience delays in being supported.
- Social Workers for care experienced children & young people have direct and easy access to CAMHS for advice and support in relation to all aspects of mental health concern in relation to the children they work with. Initial consultations can lead to direct assessment of the young persons needs, the provision of CAMHS therapeutic interventions, support to the network or signposting depending on the level of support needed.

Priority Four: Health and emotional wellbeing

Key achievements in 2023/24

Training and awareness for professionals

- Tower Hamlets CAMHS in Social Care Team contribute to the boroughs Work Learning Academy programme offering training in relation to working with complex childhood trauma as well as a collaborative approach to communicating with children called 'Words & Pictures Storyboards'. This approach involves creating an illustrated narrative for children which helps them to understand events that are difficult for adults around them to talk about.

Health Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers

- Further work was carried out with health colleagues in 2023/24 to produce the NHS North East London Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy. Consultation activities included a workshop with the 'Named' and Specialist Nurse for Children Looked After to share feedback from care experienced children to inform priority areas.

Enhanced support for children in contact with the Youth Justice Service

- A Specialist Nurse has been employed by the GP Care Group to sit within the Youth Justice Service (YJS). The YJS Nurse liaises with the Designated Nurse for 'Looked After Children' to establish how they can best work together for any care experienced children who come into contact with the YJS. This will include offering a holistic assessment and coordination of intervention and support.

Quality assurance work on Review Health Assessments

- Health colleagues in North East London Integrated Care Board have undertaken audits of Review Health Assessments using a standardised quality assurance tool. The audits were carried out at each place including Tower Hamlets.
- This work identified good practice, areas for further developments and recommendations. Action plans for each local area have been agreed and themes across the whole of North East London have been captured to help drive further improvement.

"...I was a bit worried at first but this time I feel listened to."

Priority Four: Health and emotional wellbeing

Activity highlights for 2024/25

Health & Emotional Wellbeing assessment for unaccompanied children seeking asylum

- With CAMHS and Barts Health, funding has been secured to provide a mental health assessment alongside the initial health assessment for unaccompanied children seeking asylum.
- This approach would help to respond to the trauma that many children will have experienced before they left their country of origin through delivery of a seamless process.
- Investigations are underway to see if the assessments could take place at Kitcat Terrace. Using this site would mean young people are more easily supported by their Social Workers and can also access the many other services provided from the hub.

Launch of Health Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers

- The NHS North East London Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy will be launched in early Summer 2024. Discussion will take place through the Corporate Parenting Board to consider how partners can jointly contribute to implementing the strategy objectives.

Strengthening joint working with Barnardos

- Barnardo's Young people's Emotional Wellbeing Service will be launching a service from Kitcat Terrace on a Wednesday evening including the provision of an emotional wellbeing group and access to individual therapy for young people aged up to 25 years old.

Children we care for & with care experience - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

- The focus of the JSNA will be on further developing our understanding of the health and wellbeing needs of children and young people in our care and with care experience, as well as understanding how well their needs are identified and supported. The overall purpose is to help improve health and wellbeing outcomes for our children and young people.
- The development of the JSNA will take place over several months during 2024 and will involve reviewing and analysing evidence and available records and data. There will also be engagement work with our children, potentially through surveys and/or interviews as well as on-going partnership work with a wide range of stakeholders.
- The final JSNA will include recommendations and provide us with information and data that can inform our service development and improvement work and decision making across services and organisations.



Experiences of children: health and emotional wellbeing

'G' had experienced several placements since coming into care, including foster care and residential children's homes. Due to emotional and mental health difficulties, stemming from early childhood experiences, a new bespoke placement was secured for 'G'.

After this move an emotional wellbeing network was established to meet on a weekly basis to co-ordinate the various aspects of 'G's care that could support their emotional wellbeing.

CAMHS led 'Therapeutic Life Story' work as well as delivering other support and treatment. 'G's' Virtual School Teacher supported them to build up to taking a school place in an independent provision specialising in working with children in need of small classroom learning.

The Social Worker worked very closely with the care placement staff, visiting 'G' weekly and enabling them to explore their relationship with their parent in a safe way.

Although 'G' can still struggle with emotions they have developed strategies to manage certain aspects of life, has made greater use of the support staff around them and uses techniques such as taking time out, articulating feelings and reflecting on what they find upsetting.

Priority Five: Co-production and engagement

Placing the experiences and views of children at the centre of what we do and how we do it.

Key achievements in 2023/24

Children Living in Care Council (CLICC)

The CLICC is supported by Tower Hamlets Young People's Service (YPS) and provides opportunities for care experienced young people to get involved and share their feedback to help develop and improve services. Three age-specific groups have been established:

- Junior CLICC (8 to 12 years)
- Teen CLICC (13 to 17 years)
- CLICC Plus (18 to 24 years)

The YPS also organises and delivers a varied and inspiring range of activities and events for our care experienced young people. These provide opportunities for them to meet new people, build relationships and develop greater confidence. In 2023/24 this has included:

- Visit to 'Go Ape' outdoor activity centre
- Trips to the cinema
- Summer activities - barbeque, Urban Adventure Base, A-Team Arts
- Trip to Camber Sands

Programme for CLICC Plus Group

The programme offered on Wednesday evenings at Kitcat Terrace has been refreshed and expanded with a more structured approach with themed activities.

Wednesday night sessions at Kitcat Terrace have always offered a space when young people can socialise, engage in activities, eat together and relax. Whilst maintaining the time and environment for this, a broader programme has also been developed and there are now more opportunities to access support across a range of topics whilst visiting. From early 2024 onwards the Wednesday night programme has included:

- Support and guidance from Personal Advisors on any matter that affects care experienced young people.
- Tutors to provide support with Maths, English and other subjects, as well as being any issue related to education and planning the future.
- Representatives from Careers Young WorkPath to support with careers information, advice and guidance.
- Health representatives to provide advice, information and support about emotional wellbeing.
- Housing Services representatives to help with accommodation related queries and advice on money and other financial matter from a commissioned service.

Priority Five: Co-production and engagement

Key achievements in 2023/24

Strengthening links with Foster Carers

- Engagement work between Young People's Services (YPS) and Foster Carers has helped to develop stronger relationships and a greater understanding of the offer from YPS and the benefits it can bring to children.
- Regular meetings such as 'Chat & Chai' have created spaces where these relationships can flourish further, resulting in more children joining the CLICC Groups and leading on to trips such as visit to Stubbers Adventure Centre in 2023 which brought families together with staff from the YPS.

Just4U Event

- We held another 'Just4U Event' in 2023, offering a wide range of fun and inspirational activities for children and their family members. The day was the result of planning and co-ordination across many teams, including Young Tower Hamlets, the Virtual School, Tower Hamlets Foster Carers Association and Children's Social Care Teams.
- Haileybury Youth Centre was used as the venue, providing the space to host both indoor and outdoor activities and access to information, such as how Young Workpath can offer advice and information to young people planning their future. Once again, the event offered an opportunity for people to come together in a relaxed setting, strengthening relationships in a supportive environment.

Increasing ways to give feedback

- A working group was established in 2023 to develop a new way to collect feedback across the Supporting Families Division. Staff in service areas, including our children looked after and through care teams, are now using the new process. This involves seeking feedback from families and children who have had contact with our services through a cycle which runs three times a year.
- At the end of each cycle the findings are analysed and a report produced on the findings. Our aim for this work to contribute to how we can centre the voices and experiences of children and families in the way we reflect, develop practice, and in our organisational decision making.

'Know Now' App for Care Experienced Young People

- Further development on the app has taken place in 2023/24, with more regular updates and adding of information. Links have been made with more information sources as well, such as co-ordinating with updates from the Careers Network so that events and opportunities can be shared via the app and promoted with push notifications.

"I find that I understand when she is talking to me, she explains things in a language that I understand"

Priority Five: Co-production and engagement

Activity highlights for 2024/25

Refurbishment of Kitcat Terrace

- Some funding has been secured to deliver improvements to Kitcat Terrace as a venue that our care experienced young people use as a 'home away from home'. A site visit has taken place to review the space, consider what could be done and draft indicative costs so that options are clear.
- There has been engagement with young people to get their views and find out what they would like as the refurbishment plans develop. This work will continue during 2024/25 and we will also explore options to see if any additional funding could be made available to expand the scope of what is possible.

Strengthening and expanding the offer at Kitcat Terrace

- Alongside the plans to refurbish the space at Kitcat Terrace, work will continue to further develop the support offer from this location, building on the strong foundation that's in place.
- The expansion that has already been delivered has allowed services to gather more feedback about what works and what can be improved. This feedback loop helps all providers and professionals to engage more young people and offer support in the way that works best for them.

- As the programme becomes more established new links are also being forged with other partners that could help to broaden the support provided. As previously mentioned, work is underway for the DWP to attend Kitcat Terrace on a regular basis and it is hoped that health assessment for unaccompanied children seeking asylum can start to take place at this location.

Enhancing information sharing

- The Local Offer for Care Leavers has been regularly updated since it was first produced. Young people have reviewed the material and provided feedback on what they would like to see in it, as well as the format in which it is provided.
- Further refining of the Local Offer will take place in 2024/25 as we also look at how it can work alongside the Know Now App more effectively. The aim is for these tools to provide more dynamic and flexible channels by which they can find out what they are entitled to and hear about events and offers available to them. The views of young people will be at the centre of this work so that it fits with the ways in which they find and access information on a day to day basis.

Appendix A: Membership list for the Corporate Parenting Board (including officers who also report to the board)

Name	Job Title / Organisation	Name	Job Title / Organisation
Abdul Mannan	Councillor	Leo Major	Head of Children Looked After and Through Care Services
Samantha Anderson	Young Carers Engagement Officer, Young People Services, LBTH	Geraldine O'Donnell	Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service, LBTH
Susannah Beasley-Murray	Director, Supporting People, LBTH	Nji Oranu	Head of Children's Regulated Services and Resources, Supporting Families Division, LBTH
Natalie Bienfait	Councillor	Sheleena Powtoo	Improvement Delivery Lead, LBTH
Bodrul Choudhury	Councillor	Shirley Quarshie-Dunne	Child Protection and Reviewing Service, Children's Social Care, LBTH
Peter Cox	CAMHS in Social Care Team Lead, LBTH	Steve Reddy	Interim Corporate Director – Childrens Services
David Cregan	Headteacher Virtual School, LBTH	Foster Carer Representatives	Tower Hamlets Foster Carers Association
Kelly Duggan	Head of Youth Justice and Young Peoples Service, LBTH	Young People Representatives	Children Living in Care Council
Hasan Faruq	Youth Participation & Engagement Manage, Young People Services, LBTH	Lucy Satchell-Day	Head of Service, Tower Hamlets, Probation Service
Reagender Kang	Designated Nurse for CLA, NHS NEL CCG	Tracy Stanley	Strategy & Policy Officer - Children and Culture, LBTH
Ellie Kershaw	Director of Integrated Growth & Development, LBTH	Karen Swift	Director of Housing, LBTH
Julie Lorraine	Corporate Director Resources	Maium Talukdar	Chair / Councillor
		Benjamin Yeboah	Group Manager, Through Care Service, LBTH

Appendix B – CPB Meetings and Agendas 2023/24

MEETING	KEY AGENDA ITEMS
Standing Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update from Foster Care Representatives • Update from Children Living in Care Council (CLICC) • Performance Report • Case Study (based of theme of each meeting)
February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on Placement Stability & Permanency (numbers for Adoption and SGO) • Adopt London East (ALE) Annual Report • Update on Development of Corporate Parenting Strategy
April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing on Cost of Living Support for Care Leavers • Presentation on Initial Health Assessments & Review Health Assessments performance • NHS NEL Looked After Children/Young People and Care Leavers Strategy
July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional wellbeing & mental health support and services for children we care for & care experienced young people • Findings from visit of National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers • Proposals for Strengthening Corporate Parenting Board arrangements • Draft Scope for Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for children in our care and care experienced young people
October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual School: Interim reporting of outcomes for Children in our Care • Update on Apprenticeships for Care Experienced Young People within the Council • Update on implementation of Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic • Actions in response to recommendations from Mark Riddell, National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers • Care Plan Working Group, Summary Report (Jun 2023) • Independent Reviewing Officer Manager, Annual Report (20223 to 2023)
March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanency & Placements Report • Adopt London East (ALE) Annual Report • Briefing on Children’s Social Care Government Reform – focus on Kinship Care Strategy • Launch of ‘Health Assessments’ information & promotion film • Progress update on Corporate Parenting Strategy Actions • Refreshed CPB Terms of Reference

Appendix C – Children's Social Care Key Performance Indicator Report Extract March 2024

Performance Measure	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Period	National	Regional/ Statistical Neighbours
Looked After Children							
Number of Children Looked After	306	332	301	277	Snapshot		
Children Looked After (CLA) - rate per 10,000	47	52	47	43.1	Snapshot	71	71
No. of new Children Looked After (CLA) episodes in period	131	182	134	149	YTD		
No. of Children Looked After (CLA) exits in period	131	157	167	173	YTD		
% repeat Children Looked After (CLA) (entries that were re-entries within 2 years)	2.3%	2.7%	2.2%	6.7%	YTD		
Average no. of placement moves	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.4	Rolling Year		
Max. no of placement moves	5	8	8.0	6.0	Rolling Year		
% Children Looked After (CLA) long term placement stability	73.1%	58.0%	48%	68.8%	Snapshot	69%	68%
% of Children Looked After (CLA) with a named Social Worker (key worker or personal advisor)	100.0%	100.0%	100%	100%	Snapshot		
% of CLA entries with health assessment done within 20 days	91.5%	45.7%	55.5%	53.5%	YTD		
% of CLA >12 months who had an annual Health check	83.6%	93.9%	82.4%	92.7%	Snapshot	89%	92%
% of CLA >12 months who had an annual Dental check	44.6%	78.6%	90.7%	93.2%	Snapshot	76%	79%

Performance Measure	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Period	National	Regional/ Statistical Neighbours
Section 6 - Care experienced young people							
% allocated care experienced young people "in touch" (17,18,19,20,21 yr. olds with activity updated within last year)	98.8%	88.9%	98.1%	98.2%	Snapshot		
% allocated care experienced young people 'in touch' and known to be EET	72.6%	64.3%	77.3%	76.8%	Snapshot		
% allocated care experienced young people 'in touch' and known to be in suitable accommodation	95.8%	83.6%	94.4%	92.8%	Snapshot		
% allocated care experienced young people with a pathway plan	98.2%	96.9%	95%	97.9%	Snapshot		
% allocated care experienced young people with pathway plan updated in last 6 months	95.6%	87.5%	88.3%	97.3%	Snapshot		

Performance Measure	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Period	National	Regional/ Statistical Neighbours
Fostering and Adoption							
Number of Foster Carer Enquiries (initial contact)	193	240	127	512	YTD		
No. of Foster Carer Enquiries leading to Initial Visits	53	44	24	23	YTD		
% Initial visits completed within 5 working days	44%	46%	52.2%	50%	YTD		
Total Approved Foster Carers (incl. family & friends)	103	102	115	116	Snapshot		
Foster Carer Vacancy rate (excl. short breaks & non available places)	14.5%	8.1%	13.9%	9.1%	Snapshot	19.7%	19.9%
Foster Carer Occupancy Rate (excl. short breaks & non available places)	79.4%	76.5%	78.7%	73.9%	Snapshot	61.1%	62.9%
No. of children placed with In-house Foster Carers	109	116	123	119	Snapshot		
No. of children in Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) Placements	85	72	77	67	Snapshot		
Children in Residential Placements (incl dual registered schools and mother & baby units)	27	22	18	19	Snapshot		

Performance Measure	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Period	National	Regional/ Statistical Neighbours
Fostering and Adoption (continued)							
Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family	432.3	509.5	572.4	600.4	YTD (3 years)		
Average time between court authority to place a child and deciding on a match	245	300	369	447	YTD	175	182
% waiting less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their family (14 months)	36.1%	35.7%	41.2%	57.1%	Snapshot		
Adoptions from care (number adopted and percentage leaving care who are adopted)	6.1%	8.7%	7.1%	1.1%	YTD	13	7.6
Number of Adoptions and Special Guardianship Orders granted for Looked After Children (S)	17	18	17	10	YTD		
The percentage of black and minority ethnic children leaving care who are adopted	3.9%	7.1%	5.4%	1.3%	YTD		
The percentage of children who ceased to be looked after because of an SGO	8.4%	2.5%	3%	4.6%	YTD		17.7%
Percentage of Children Looked After (CLA) placed for adoption within 12 months of agency decision	88%	50%	75%	50%	YTD		

Performance Measure	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23 Summer	2023/24 Autumn	Period
Virtual School					
% of pupils making expected progress in English and Maths	62%	67%	64%	69%	Termly
% of pupils where a Pupil Education Plans (PEP) meeting took place in the term	95%	96%	98%	100%	Termly
% of Pupil Education Plans (PEPs) which were signed off and RAG rated green	91%	78%	86%	87%	Termly