



Waltham Forest Corporate Parenting

What we promise to do for you
Our Strategy

September 2022 – 2023



Waltham Forest for all

CONTENTS

- A message from Alistair
- Some of your thoughts as children in care and care experienced children
- Introduction
- Our vision
- Our duty to you, children in care and care experienced children
- A picture of our children and young people
- How this fits in with everything else
- How money fit into all this
- Our priorities
 - PRIORITY 1: Feeling listened to and understood
 - PRIORITY 2: Feeling safe and being safe
 - PRIORITY 3: Somewhere to live that is suitable
 - PRIORITY 4: Being independent and achieving ambitions
 - PRIORITY 5: Keeping healthy and living a healthy lifestyle

A MESSAGE FROM ALISTAIR – Lead Member for Children & Families




Here in Waltham Forest our children, young people and families are at the heart of everything we do. As your Corporate Parents, we promise to care for you and support you as if you were our own child. We take our role as Corporate Parents very seriously and we want you to thrive, aim high, try your best and learn the skills you need and want to live a happy and independent life.

We have a duty to provide the stability, support and care that is needed for you to achieve your ambitions in life. We will make sure that your life experiences are central to decisions made about you and that we always remember things like your birthday, beliefs and your culture when we work with you.

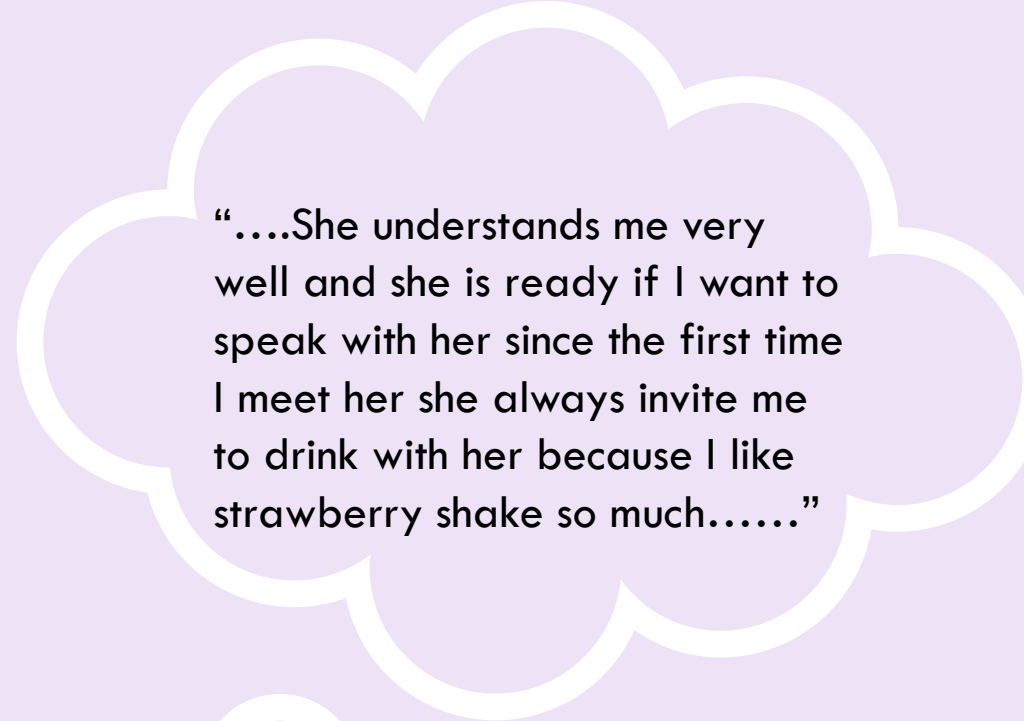
We know that life is not always easy, but we are proud of you and will always try to show you this as we celebrate your key milestones and successes. When life gets tough, we promise to listen to you, acknowledge how you feel, support you where we can and be kind.

This document is our promise to you and we hope you find it useful, together with the guidance and support from our Children in Care and Leaving Care Service. We know that you are all different and we promise to remember this when we work with you. We will always listen to any feedback that you have about this document or any of our services and commit to continuing to improve so that you and your family, and those who care for you have all the support they need. We are determined to help everyone in Waltham Forest live a happy, healthy and fulfilling life where they feel safe and cared for – from childhood to adulthood.

SOME OF YOUR THOUGHTS AS CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN

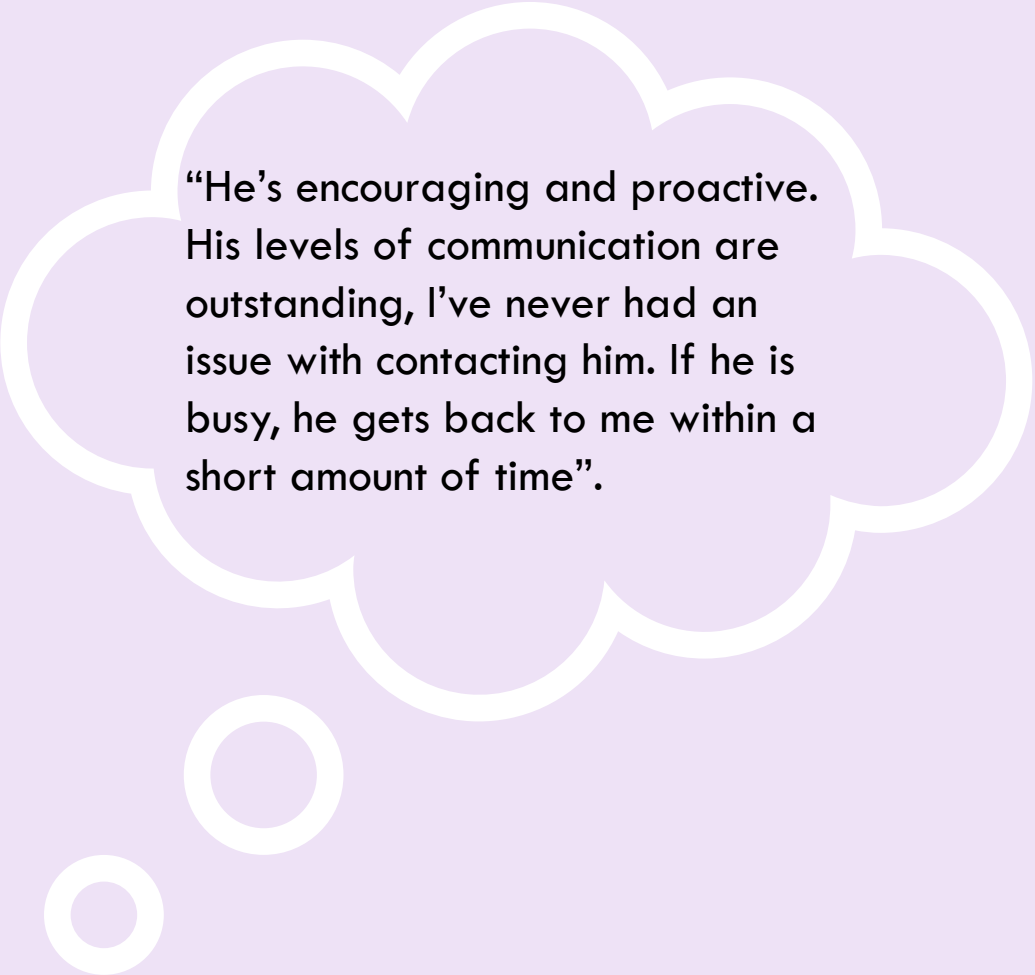


“I feel like I'm talking directly to the source when I attend Corporate Parenting Board, good to go if you want to get your point across”

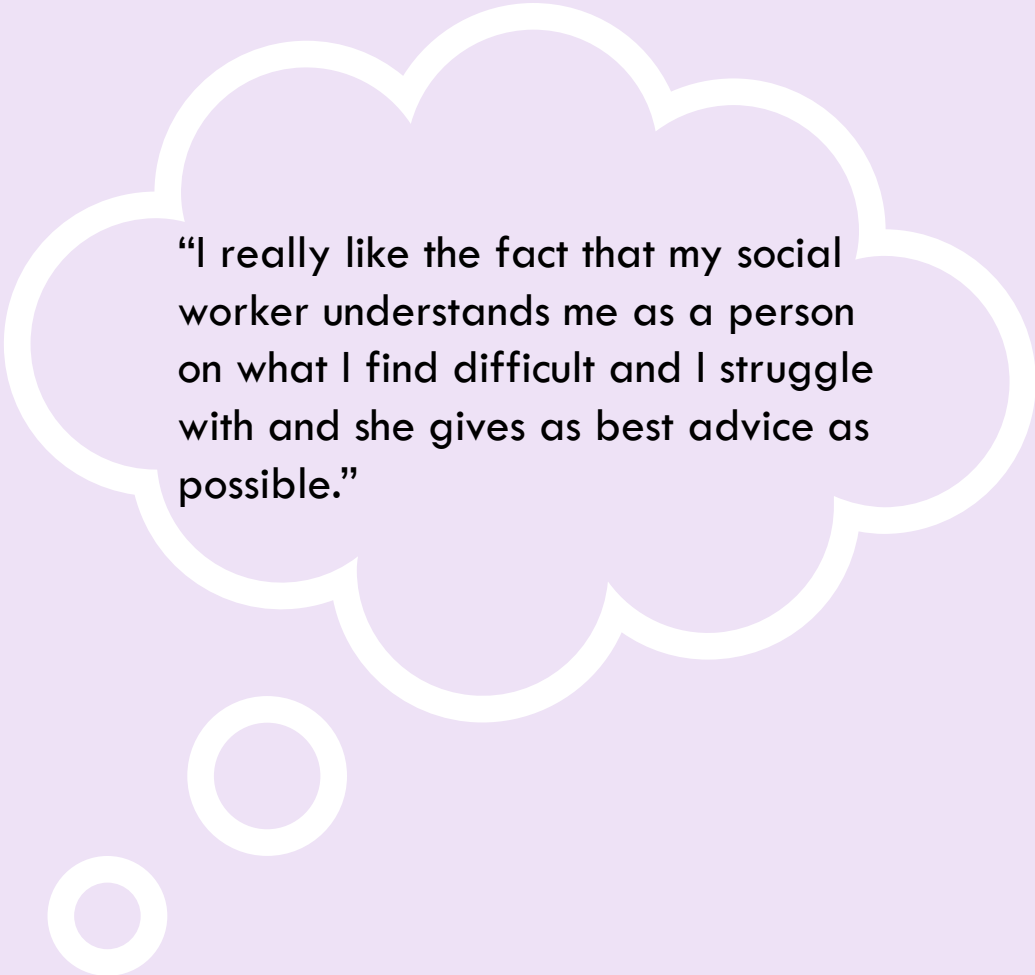


“....She understands me very well and she is ready if I want to speak with her since the first time I meet her she always invite me to drink with her because I like strawberry shake so much.....”

SOME OF YOUR THOUGHTS AS CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN



“He’s encouraging and proactive. His levels of communication are outstanding, I’ve never had an issue with contacting him. If he is busy, he gets back to me within a short amount of time”.



“I really like the fact that my social worker understands me as a person on what I find difficult and I struggle with and she gives as best advice as possible.”

INTRODUCTION

This document is a promise of what we'll do for you in the coming year. It's also known as a strategy. This has been put together using what you have told us and also using the information from our Corporate Parenting Services annual report from 2021-22 which describes all of the work we did in that year. You can look at the annual report alongside this document.

Corporate Parenting is the term used in law to describe the responsibility every member of staff in a council has, to:

- care for you and all of our children in care and care experienced children;
- ensure you all have every opportunity to reach your full potential as you grow up in our family

This strategy document is about working in partnership with you, our children and young people. We understand you have the right and responsibility to have a say in how services work for you and this document describes how we will work with you to improve the experiences you, and other children in and leaving our care have.

This document is written for you. Because of this, it is addressed to you. We will use words 'child in care' and 'care-experienced children', and we'll also speak about you as 'our children'. This is what you, our children and young people, have told us you prefer as part of the work you did for the [TACT Language that Cares](#) document in 2019 and also throughout the times we have spoken with you more recently.



OUR VISION

We are loving parents who care about you and we are interested in you as a person. We care for you as if you are our own child. We want the best for you and we will be there for you whenever you need. We'll also back you up and fight for you when that's needed. We will do everything we can to give you the skills you need to live a fulfilling, successful, and rewarding life that is full of love and happiness. We'll also do all we can to make sure you are healthy and well, both physically and emotionally.

We will take bold and innovative steps to ensure that the people who are privileged to parent you have the right training, support, knowledge and skills that you need and deserve.

The London Borough of Waltham Forest is committed to being a caring and ambitious corporate parent and we will show this through the ways we support you, the ways we talk to you and about you and the way we work in partnership with you. We will do everything we can to make sure that you are set up for life. Waltham Forest is for all and you will always be a part of that.



OUR DUTY TO YOU, CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN

In 2017, a law was passed, the Children and Social Work Act, which meant that Waltham Forest Council and partners had to promise to provide you with the best care they could. These promises are called [Corporate Parenting Principles](#) and there are seven of them which sum up our hopes and goals for our work with you, your carers and your families and how we will help you thrive. In order to carry out our duty for children and young people who are looked after, we need:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- 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
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Waltham Forest Pledge

We promise to do our best to keep you at the heart of everything we do, by involving you in decisions that affect your life and by making sure that carers and workers in your life support you to achieve the best that you possibly can.

A PICTURE OF OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

This table shows the numbers of our young people we currently support in our Corporate Parenting Services

AT A GLANCE	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
No. of children in our care as at 31 March of each year	304	317	329
No. of children (0-17 years old) per 10,000 in our care as at 31 March of each year	46	47	49
% of our children in care living with foster families (both in and out of the borough) as at 3 March of each year	72%	74%	73%
% of our children as at 31 March of each year placed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> within local authority area, within 20 miles from home outside the local authority area, within 20 miles from home outside the local authority area, over 20 miles from home 	30%	36%	36%
	36%	33%	34%
	16%	17%	14%
Care leavers now aged 19, 20 and 21 who were looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday including some time after their 16th birthday	171	195	209
Percentage of our Care Leavers in education employment and training 1st April on 31st March of each year	54% (17-18yrs) 50% (19-21yrs)	53% (17-18yrs) 55% (19-21yrs)	75% (17-18yrs) 65% (19-21yrs)
New starters in care during 1st April - 31st March of each year	168	138	149

HOW THIS FITS IN WITH EVERYTHING ELSE

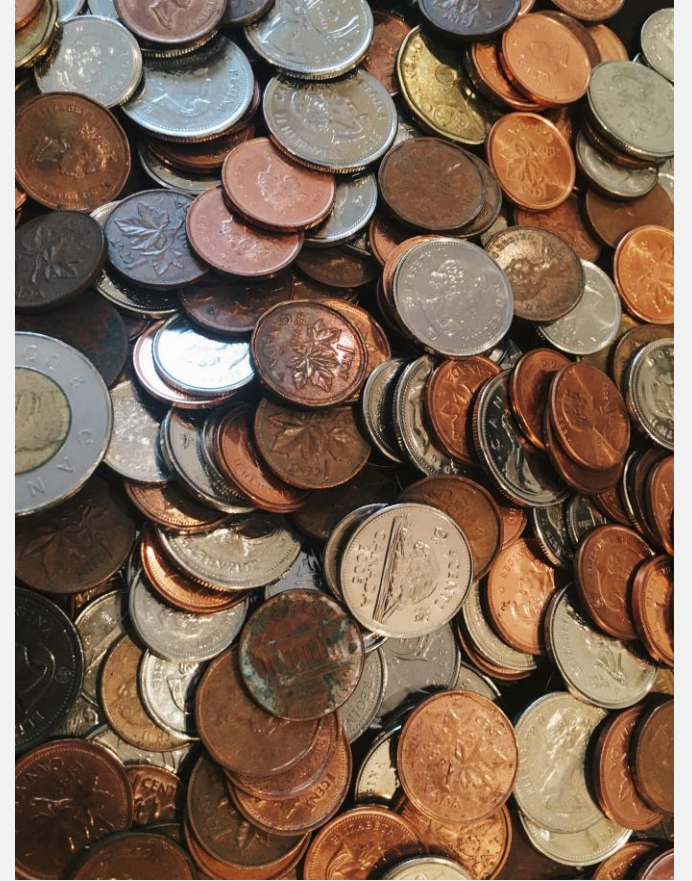
This document is only one piece of work out of many others that helps us to support you. Some of the other areas of work that help us to do this fully are:

- Our Pledge to Children in Care and Leaving Care
- Our Corporate Parenting Board meetings that some of you are involved in, with your views at the heart of what we do
- Our regular Children in Care Council and Care Leavers' Forum meetings to ensure that your life experiences, voices and opinions are at the centre of the work we do
- Our excellent Virtual School works with schools, colleges, training providers, other places of education and children's social care to support you to achieve all that you can during your time in education.
- Improving Life Chances work and the [Big Youth Conversation](#) which is an annual survey designed and developed by the Life Chances Youth Taskforce, to improve services for young people throughout the borough.
- [15 Minute Neighbourhood](#) which means everyone who lives in Waltham Forest should be able to meet most, if not all of their needs within a short walk, using public transport or a short bike ride from their home to help them live a fulfilling and healthy life.
- [Families at the Heart of Our Place](#) working with residents to make sure that Waltham Forest remains a safe and healthy place to live, study, work and play and to grow up and grow older.
- [The Independent Review of Children's Social Care](#) will bring about a lot of changes for us all in the future so we are thinking about this now as we plan and develop our services.

HOW MONEY FIT INTO ALL THIS

Covering the costs of any type of service is complicated and since the pandemic this has become much harder for everyone, everywhere. Now, the cost of living is adding more pressure.

So, over the next few years our job to cover the costs of everything will become even more challenging than normal but this won't stop us making sure we get the best and most effective services possible for you. We are promising to treat you as our own child and this means that we'll make sure you have everything you need to live a happy and independent life when you leave our care.



OUR PRIORITIES

For us to be good parents to you while you are in our care, we are focussing on the five priorities below that you have told us and the trusted adults in your lives are important to you.

**Feeling listened to
and understood**



**Feeling safe and
being safe**



**Somewhere to live
that is suitable**



**Being independent
and achieving
ambitions**



**Keeping healthy and
living a healthy
lifestyle**



PRIORITY 1: Feeling listened to and understood



YOU SAID

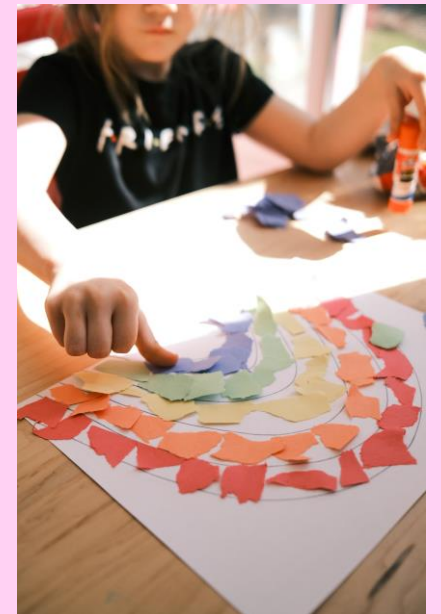
“It gives me a direct connection to leaders of the service.”

“...When I talk to her about my feelings, she is very kind and understanding. When she comes to visit, she spends a lot of time with me and I am very grateful...”

Your life experiences are at the heart of how we design services, how we work with you and how we check if they're working well. We believe that you, as well as your families and carers, are the experts in your own experiences. Your voice must be heard when decisions are made about services that affect you and your voice and opinions are valued and respected.

WE WILL

- Make sure you can make it to important meetings and you have a choice about how you take part
- Encourage you to get involved with the Voice & Influence Service activities and events
- Make sure you have access to those making decisions about you
- Make sure you are part of the decisions and choices we make and if you can't be, then we tell you about those decisions and why we made them
- Tell you straight away about any important changes need to be made and why
- Support you to see your family



PRIORITY 2: Feeling safe and being safe



YOU SAID

“If he’s off work he makes me aware of this and gives me contact details of who to contact should I need anything. He speaks with warmth and never rushes”

“This is the best place to live, and I am happy living with my foster family. We spend time having fun together and experience, peace, love, and joy throughout the day”

You should always feel valued, connected and safe and that you belong. It is important to us that we build trusted and safe relationships with you and your family while you are in care and leaving care. We also know how important it is that we help you to make informed choices about the people you go on to form friendships and connections with. We want to reduce the number of times the professionals in your life change and the number of times you change where you live and where you go to school so that you can keep your friendships and trusted relationships.

WE WILL

- Do everything to keep you safe from harm
- Make sure there is always someone you can speak to about how safe you are feeling
- Always tell you when we are worried and think you are in an unsafe situation
- Share information with you to help you make confident decisions about your own safety



PRIORITY 3: Somewhere to live that is suitable



YOU SAID

“She is making sure our permanent placement is sorted out. We love that we will have a permanent home soon”

“Living here is genuinely homely. It feels like my home and is my home. I feel understood through hard times and I know I’m always going to be loved and supported”

We want to make sure you can live in high-quality housing that has everything you need to be safe and happy as you move onto independent living. These homes will give you stability and the chance to maintain relationships that are important to you, near to your school and community where possible.

WE WILL

- Ask you what’s important to you before finding you somewhere to live
- Explain the reasons why somewhere was chosen for you to live
- Do our best to find you somewhere to live near your friends and family
- Tell you where / who you are going to live with before you move there



PRIORITY 4: Being independent and achieving ambitions



YOU SAID

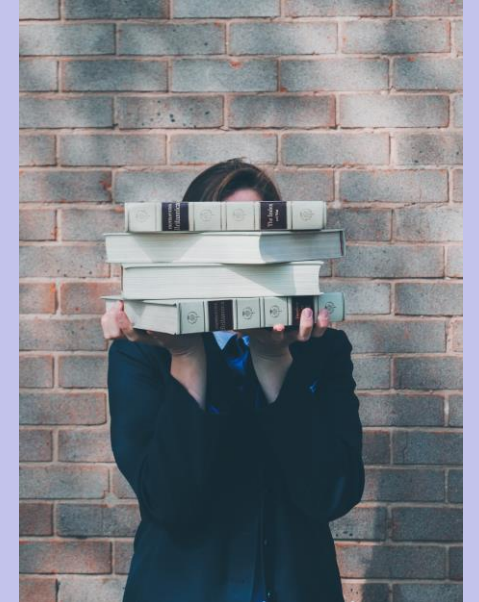
Quote from Virtual
school or anywhere
else?

Quote from VS or
anywhere else?

We want you to have the same or better opportunities as children who are not looked after. We believe in you and we are ambitious about what you can achieve. We are committed to supporting you as you become an adult and gain independence and understand there are many different pathways for learning and achieving.

WE WILL

- Make sure you have the things you need to help with your schoolwork
- Help you develop your skills and interests
- Celebrate your achievements and tell you when you're doing really well
- Support you to become the person you want to be
- Ensure you have access to important documents when you need them
- Work with education and training providers and employers to help you be more confident in yourself and be ready for your future.



PRIORITY 5: Keeping healthy and living a healthy lifestyle



YOU SAID YOU VALUE

“....having the choice of face to face or virtual appointments and being able to be seen at home or in the clinic at a time that suits you” such as after school

“.... seeing the same nurse for your health review as this helps build up a trusted working relationship and to seek advice outside of the health review for any health concerns”

You should be able to easily access all health services available, as well as making use of specialist services where necessary.

Difficult and traumatic experiences growing up can impact your mental health and wellbeing, now and in the future. We want our health services to support you to develop positive mental health coping strategies and gain the skills to support your own mental health as you become an adult

WE WILL

- Work to reduce any barriers you have with living a healthy life.
- Help you to access high quality services.
- Make sure that you can get support for your mental health when you want and/or need to. We are working hard to make well-being and mental health services more easily available, but not just for you - also for your whole family.
- Make sure health services and health information provided to you and your carers are high quality

