

The background of the slide features a stylized, pixelated illustration of a globe. The globe is primarily blue with green landmasses. Overlaid on the globe are several dark grey silhouettes of people in various poses, suggesting movement and global connectivity. The overall aesthetic is modern and digital.

# **OUR MISSION WALTHAM FOREST**

**Our Strategy 2025 – 2026**

Waltham Forest Corporate Parenting

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## **Message from Councillor Kizzy Gardiner, Chair and Lead Member for Children and Families**

As I reflect on my second year as Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB), I continue to feel honoured to work alongside inspiring young people, dedicated professionals, and committed carers. Our shared responsibility as corporate parents, to secure the best possible outcomes for children and young people, remains one of the most significant roles we hold.

The Board's purpose is to celebrate what's working well and to shine a light on areas where improvements are needed. When challenges arise, we dig deep, asking questions to truly understand the issues at hand and to identify what changes are necessary. Our ongoing mission is to ensure every child and every family has the support and opportunities they need to flourish and to live safe, healthy lives.

It has been a pleasure to have Blessing as co-Chair over the past year. Her enthusiasm and commitment have brought fresh ideas to the Board. Working together, we have been able to strengthen our focus on what matters most to children and young people, ensuring their voices are central to every decision we make.

With young people actively shaping our Board's work, we are continually reminded to listen, learn, and act with their best interests at heart.



## Outgoing message from Blessing, outgoing Co-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board

I have been co-chair of CPB for the past year. During this I have grown in confidence and had experiences that I didn't think I would have, like a personal trip to meet with Calvin Bailey MP in the secret tunnels of House of Commons.

I think that the board is so important that I have prioritised being there over lots of other things, like the last meeting when I finished off my maths GCSE revision whilst also chairing the board.

I want to encourage as many other young people to come along to express their opinions on such an important area of our lives. We can't let people make decisions about our lives without better understanding of our experiences and hearing our views.

# What Children and Young People Have Told Us

“

*“My social worker always encourages me and speaks life into me”*

”

**Feeling Safe and Supported**

“

*“I think she should take me out to the park and Costa. She has never taken me out!”*

”

**Ways to Improve Going Forward**

“

*“My social worker has gone above and beyond to support me with my rent and utility bill arrears, giving me emotional reassurance as well as helping me with referrals.”*

”

**Recognising Commitment and Care**

“

*“If it wasn't for my social worker I don't think I would be here now and that's the truth, in the last year I have made an extremely positive turn around in my life .”*

”

**Feeling Safe and Supported**

“

*“My social worker has made me feel safe and comfortable to talk about vulnerable things... she made me feel very comfortable and comforted me.”*

”

**Feeling Safe and Supported**

“

*“I really appreciate the support, but one area they could improve is communication. Sometimes key updates or opportunities didn't reach everyone in time, and a more consistent or centralised communication channel would help keep us all informed and engaged!”*

”

**Ways to Improve Going Forward**

# Introduction

This document outlines the commitments we will make to you over the coming year and is intended to be read alongside the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2024/25.

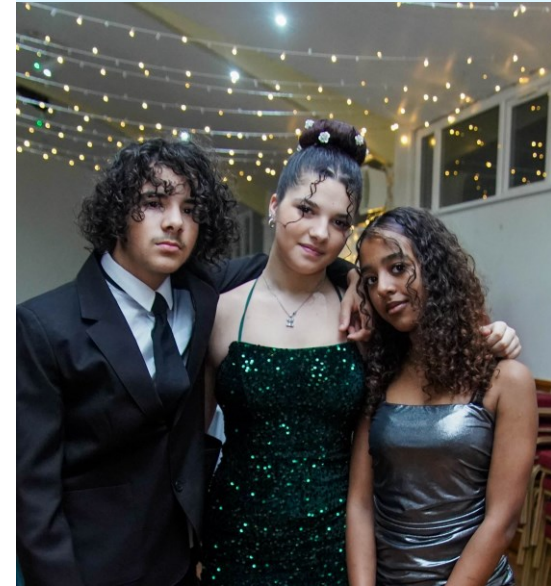
Corporate Parenting is a legal term that describes the responsibility every council staff member must care for you, along with all children in care and care-experienced children. It also means ensuring you have every opportunity to reach your full potential while growing up as part of our family.

This strategy has been developed based on:

- What you have shared with us
- Information from our Corporate Parenting Services Annual Report 2024-25, which details all the work carried out during that year

The strategy focuses on working together with you, our children and young people. We recognize that you have both the right and responsibility to express how services affect you. This document explains how we will collaborate with you to improve the experiences of you and other children currently in, or leaving, our care.

This document is written specifically for you and is addressed directly to you. We will use terms like 'child in care' and 'care-experienced children,' and refer to you as 'our children,' as this is the language you told us you prefer.



# Mission Waltham Forest

Our Borough Missions focus on the issues that matter most to our residents and sets out our promise to deliver on these missions. Our corporate parenting strategy aims to meet all our council missions.



## Mission 1

**Ensure every family and every child are given every opportunity**

We will ensure every family and every child can access the services and support they need so all children can thrive.



## Mission 2

**Build an economy that works for everyone**

We will shape a more inclusive local economy that attracts businesses and talent while unlocking opportunities for residents.



## Mission 3

**Make Waltham Forest a great place to live and age well**

We will ensure all residents can make the most of their strengths and live healthier, longer, and more independent lives.



## Mission 4

**Tackle the housing crisis head on**

We will deliver a new generation of homes that are affordable to buy and affordable to live in.



## Mission 5

**Lead the way for a net-zero borough**

We will tackle the Climate Emergency head on, paving the way for net zero in Waltham Forest.



## Mission 6

**Safe, green neighbourhoods where everyone can thrive**

We will ensure every resident feels safe in their home and neighbourhood and feels included and welcome.



# Our Achievements Since 2024

## **Adoption Service**

- The council is promoting open adoption principles and providing adoption allowances alongside emotional and psychological support.

## **Fostering and Permanence Services**

- Attention to ethnicity trends in adoption and fostering through initiatives like Black Adoption to address representation gaps.

## **Health Services**

- Ongoing clinics focused on mental health and infectious disease screening, particularly for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

## **Independent Reviewing Service**

- Focus on therapeutic support and smoother transition planning, starting transition processes earlier (from age 17).
- There were 674 childcare reviews held in 2024/25 and 93% were held on time.

## **Leaving Care Service**

- Introduction of free prescriptions, mental health support, and a joint housing protocol update for care leavers.
- Provision of Transport for London travel discounts and skills development opportunities.

## **Voice and Influence Service**

- Establishment of a peer-led mental health support group supported by CAMHS.



## Our Promise

We are caring parents who genuinely value you and your unique qualities. We see you as our own and want the very best for you. You can rely on us to be there whenever you need—supporting you, standing up for you, and helping you build the skills you need for a fulfilling, successful, and joyful life. We'll make sure your health and emotional wellbeing are looked after, too.

We're committed to taking bold and innovative steps so that everyone who has the privilege of parenting you is equipped with the right training, knowledge, and support. As corporate parents, we promise that you will benefit from the Family Firm model by having real opportunities to grow, learn, and thrive.

Waltham Forest is dedicated to being a caring and ambitious corporate parent. We'll prove this through our support, our conversations with and about you, and our ongoing partnership. You are a valued part of your neighbourhood, and you'll always belong here. We promise to keep you at the centre of everything, including the decisions that shape your life and your future.



# 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.

In 2023, the government set out its commitment to widening corporate parenting responsibilities in its [Stable Homes, Built on Love](#) strategy.

These promises are called [Corporate Parenting Principles](#), and they sum up our hopes and goals for our work with you, your carers and your families and how we will help you thrive.

## **Our seven promises**

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
2. To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
3. To consider 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. To ensure children and young people have safety and stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
7. To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

# The Local Context – A Picture of Our Children and Young People

Below are stats that show who we currently support within our Corporate Parenting Services as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025



**56.6%**

of care leavers aged  
19-21 are in education,  
employment and training

**56.5%**

of care leavers aged  
17-18 are in education,  
employment and training



There are **47**  
children per 10,000  
in our care

**73%**

of our children in  
care living with  
foster families  
(both in and out  
of the borough)

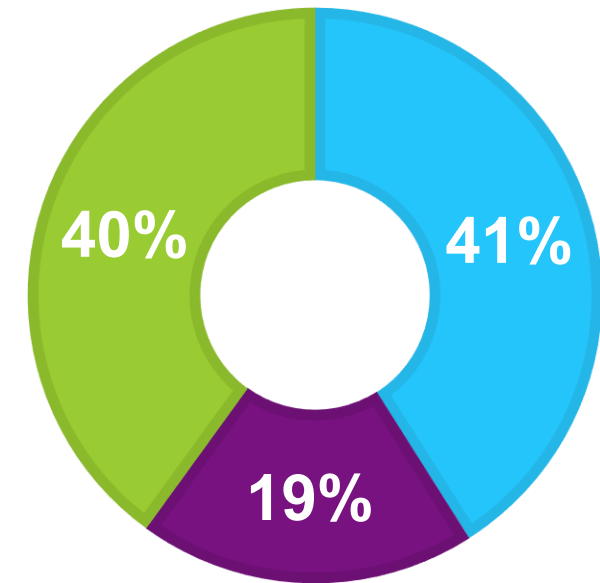


There are **119** new  
starters in care from  
1<sup>st</sup> April 2025

**292**

Children in Care

Percentage of our children placed  
inside and outside of the borough:



- Within the local authority area, within 20 miles from home
- Outside the local authority area, over 20 miles from home



# How Does Money Fit into This?

Covering the costs of any type of service is complicated, and with the rising cost of living, this has become much harder for everyone, everywhere.

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 fulfilling our duty. We will make the right investments and spend our money wisely, in line with Mission Waltham Forest, whilst making sure that 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 will focus on the five priorities below that you have told us and the trusted adults in your lives are important to you.

**Independence and Preparation for the Future:** We believe in our young people, and we are ambitious about what they can achieve. We are committed to supporting them as they transition into adulthood and gain independence.

**Health and Wellbeing:** We want to improve our children and young people's overall wellbeing, and help them get healthier, mentally, and physically so that we can better support them.

**Identity and Belonging:** The experiences of children and young people are the most important part of how we design our services. We want to listen to what they have to say and for them to feel more connected, empowered, and supported.

**Education and Employment:** We want to help children and young people become more empowered, skilled, and confident so that they are ready to achieve their goals and ambitions.

**Safety and Stability:** We want to create a safer, more stable, and supportive living environment for our children and young people, improving their overall well-being and trust in the system.

# Priority 1: Safety and Stability

We want to create a safer, more stable, and supportive living environment for you, improving your overall well-being and trust in the system.

## **What you told us**

“People in charge need to know about our trauma and think about what a home means to us or we [will] hold it in and one day we will explode, and someone will hurt themselves. This is a big deal”

## **What we will focus on**

- Ensuring you have a suitable living environment
- Ensuring that you are safe and don't move places a lot
- Ensuring that you can trust the professionals and family around you.

## **What we will do**

- 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
- Explain the reasons why somewhere was chosen for you to live
- Do our best to find you somewhere to live near your friends & family
- Tell you where / who you are going to live with before you move there

## **Expected outcomes**

### Enhanced Feeling of Safety:

You will feel safer knowing there is always someone to talk to about your safety

### Informed Decisions:

You will be better equipped to make confident decisions about your own safety as we will give you access to the information you need.

### Personalised Living Arrangements:

You will be asked what's important to you and we will explain why a living arrangement was chosen

### Reduced Anxiety:

We will let you know where you will live, and who you will live with before you move so that you feel more secure and prepared for this big transition.

### Improved Trust and Stability:

There will be consistent communication you will be involved in decision making.

# Priority 2: Health and Wellbeing

We want to improve your overall wellbeing, and help you get healthier, mentally and physically so that we can better support you.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>What you told us</b></p> <p>“[Corporate Parenting services are there to] keep us safe and healthy...[and think] about our wellbeing”</p>   | <p><b>What we will focus on</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your mental and physical health</li><li>• Your emotional wellbeing</li><li>• Giving you general support</li></ul>   |
| <p><b>What we will do</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce any barriers you have with living a healthy life.</li><li>• Help you to access high quality services.</li><li>• Make sure that you can get support for your mental health when you want and/or need to.</li><li>• Make sure health services and health information provided to you and your carers are high quality</li></ul> | <p><b>Expected outcomes</b></p> <p><u>Improved Health and Wellbeing:</u><br/>You will have better mental and physical health due to us getting rid of the barriers that stop you from living a healthy life</p> <p><u>Enhanced Access to Services:</u><br/>You will find it easier to access high-quality health services and support</p> |



# Priority 3: Identity and Belonging

Your experiences are the most important part of how we design our services. We want to listen to what you have to say and for you to feel more connected, empowered, and supported.

## What you told us

- They want to connect with other children and young people.
- They want to feel listened to by their social worker and health staff.
- They want to feel included in the care process.

## What we will focus on

- Identity and belonging so you feel that you are part of a community.
- Building spaces where you can connect with others
- Working out issues that stop you from getting involved in services because we don't want you to miss out.

## What we will do

- Make sure you can make it to important meetings
- Ensure you have a choice about how you take part in services
- Encourage you to get involved with the Voice & Influence Service activities and events
- Make sure you have access to those making decisions about you
- Tell you straight away about any important changes that need to be made and why

## Expected outcomes

- Stronger Sense of Community:  
You will feel like you are part of a supportive and loving community.
- Increased Participation:  
More of you will get involved in our services and activities
- Improved Accessibility and Inclusion:  
We will make sure that you can attend important meetings and have a choice In your future.

# Priority 4: Education and Employment

We want to help you become more empowered, skilled, and confident so that you are ready to achieve your goals and ambitions

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>What you told us</b></p> <p>They want support when thinking about the future and applying for jobs</p>   | <p><b>What we will focus on</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Getting more of you in either education, employment and training as these are the pathways that will allow you to achieve your goals and ambitions.</li></ul>  |
| <p><b>What we will do</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Make sure you have the things you need to help with your schoolwork</li><li>Help you develop your skills and interests</li><li>Work with education and training providers and employers to help you be more confident in yourself and be ready for your future</li></ul> | <p><b>Expected outcomes</b></p> <p><u>Increased Educational Achievement:</u><br/>You will have the resources and support you need to excel in your schoolwork</p> <p><u>Enhanced Skill Development:</u><br/>We will support you to improve your skills and try to figure out what your interests are</p> <p><u>Greater Confidence and Readiness for the Future:</u><br/>We will work hard with schools, trainers and employers to help you build your confidence</p> <p><u>Higher Rates of Employment and Training Participation:</u><br/>We will have more young people in employment and training.</p> |

# Priority 5: Independence and Preparation for the Future

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 ways to learn and succeed.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>What you told us</b></p> <p>They want to have the right skills to set them up for the future where they can thrive.</p>   | <p><b>What we will focus on</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Building your independence and confidence</li><li>• Building your skills and knowledge</li><li>• Setting you up for a positive and successful future</li></ul>   |
| <p><b>What we will do</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Celebrate your achievements and tell you when you're doing really well</li><li>• Support you to become the person you want to be</li><li>• Ensure you have access to important documents when you need them</li><li>• Help you to prepare for being an adult and living on your own</li></ul> | <p><b>Expected outcomes</b></p> <p><u>Increased Self-Esteem and Motivation:</u><br/>We will celebrate your achievements and provide you with positive feedback to boost your self-esteem</p> <p><u>Personal Growth:</u><br/>We will support you in becoming the person they want to be</p> <p><u>Enhanced Independence and Life Skills:</u><br/>We will prepare you for adulthood and make sure you have the right life skills</p> <p><u>Improved Access to Essential Resources:</u><br/>We will make sure you have the right documents that will give you all the right information to build your knowledge.</p> <p><u>Long-Term Success and Stability:</u><br/>Through our support, we will lead you to being better prepared for adulthood.</p> |