

2020-2023

Havering's Corporate Parenting Strategy



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH



**I'm always out running free,
Somewhere that I wanna be,
Never in placement for more than three,
I'm outside properly climbing a tree.**

**To find out on a sunny day,
That I am unable to go my own way,
The fear of unknown hit hard I must say,
I hope this is all over soon I pray.**

**I feel trapped,
I feel grounded by Boris,
I feel stuck,
I feel to just break the rules and go outside.**

**Although my carers are very nice,
The house I live in is also very nice,
I like to come and go as I please,
I got things to do people to see.**

**However I understand,
I must abide by the rules,
Stay Home Stay Safe Save Life's,
Wash your hands stay 2 metres behind.**

Coronavirus go away.



Foreword – Care experienced young person

I came into care when I was seven years old with my older brother. I remember feeling scared and not knowing what was happening or why. This experience is something that many of us have when we come into care. What is happening and why it is happening are not usually explained in a way that we can understand. However, Havering, my Corporate Parents, found us carers who are kind, caring and patient—instantly making me feel like I was part of their family, which made a world of difference. My brother and I could stay together, which was not only important to us but, was also a big help to support me to understand what was happening. It's essential to have people around you that know what you are going through.

My Carer's, Social Worker and opportunities provided by Havering have not only supported my journey and personal growth but, have also helped me to make friends with other children who share similar experiences. Being treated with respect and care is vital to us – it's often the little things that make a difference. Listening to the views, wishes and feelings of people in care, who all have very different experiences, good and bad, is something Havering as a Corporate Parent should continue.

Havering celebrate our achievements in several creative ways – please do not underestimate how great this is and how positive it makes us feel. The fact that we get to perform and share other talents is great! It's nice to see people who are older than me (Care Leavers) who may have had a hard background, overcome obstacles.

Knowing our rights and entitlements is crucial and also helps create understanding. My message to you all would be, please remember we are children who need to feel safe, cared for and listened too. Please be patient when you are trying to explain something to us – you may need to find a different way to help us understand. And lastly, some of our behaviours may be seen as challenging – we are trying to tell you something, that we are struggling to articulate verbally.

I'm looking forward to updating our Pledge/Promises over the next six weeks, supported by the Children in Care Council, which is now a Children in Care Youth Club. Gaining the thoughts and feelings of as many care experienced children and young people as possible will support the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Ashwina Sobrun
Young person in care

Foreword – Cllr Robert Benham

Both members and officers at Havering council aspire to be the best “corporate parent.” We have a duty to seek out every opportunity to support children and young people in our care. This strategy, informed by views of children and young people and approved by the council’s Cabinet, will deliver our ambition to support children in care and care leavers who (for whatever reason) are not able to live with their birth parents.

Children in our care and young adults who are care leavers are the most disadvantaged in our society, and it is the role of the local authority (supported by carers and our partners) to provide stability, support and care they need to achieve their ambitions in life.

We want to be the best corporate parent that we can be. But what does that mean?

It means a step-change in our ambition for the children in our care. It involves them being supported by all of us, across the council. It means providing them with the many opportunities our borough has to offer. Above all, it means hearing their voice (and acting on it), support their aspirations, recognising and celebrating their diversity, celebrating their success and taking pride just as any birth parent or grandparent would with their children.

Everyone can play their part. This strategy sets out our vision and priorities about things that matter to young people. They tell us they want to feel safe and live in a home where they feel safe. They want a good education and for us to be ambitious for them. They, like many young people, have been affected by the COVID pandemic and may have significant mental health challenges in the months and years ahead.

Children in our care need us to support them, to push them and to be on their side when things are tough. Between us, we can deliver the ambition in this strategy and be proud parents to the 400 plus children in our care and those leaving our care.

Robert Benham, Cabinet Member for Education, Children & Families and Deputy Leader of the Council




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The role that the council plays in looking after children is one of the most important things we do. The local authority has a unique responsibility to the children we care for and also to our care leavers. This makes us a Corporate Parent to over 400 children and young adults in our care.

A good corporate parent should have the same aspirations for a child in care or care leaver, as a good parent would have for their child. It means providing them with the stability and support they need to make progress; and helping them to access new opportunities and experiences that inspire them to set ambitious goals for themselves. It means celebrating their successes, but also recognising that they will sometimes make mistakes and need help to get back on track. It also means supporting them to gain the skills and confidence to live independent lives, while letting them know that they have someone to call on for help if the going gets tough.

This document has been produced to set out how we intend to challenge ourselves as corporate parents over the next three years. It provides the legal and local context in which we operate, our vision for children in our care and how we intend to deliver on the priorities which are set out in legislation.

Our duty to children

Corporate parenting refers to the shared responsibility across the council to ensure that children and young people in our care or leaving care are supported to thrive. Young people in care and care leavers are individuals who often have had difficult experiences in some of the most formative years of their lives. As good corporate parents we must ensure, as any good parent would for their child, that we listen to our young people, care for them, keep them safe, celebrate their success, cultivate their talents, support them when things go wrong, and prepare them to live successful independent lives.

There are seven principles set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which must guide the actions of corporate parents towards children in care and care leavers.

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 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.

7

To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

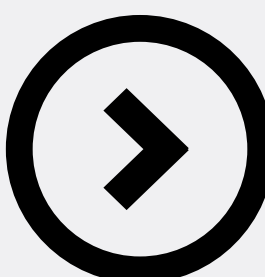
Our duty to children cont'd

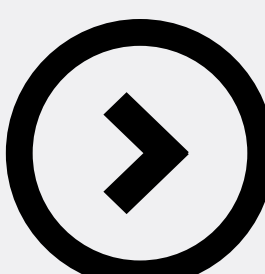
These duties should not be understood as seven separate entities but as interlinked components that are all required, to ensure we act as a good corporate parent.

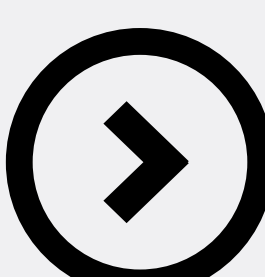
This strategy sets out how we will deliver on these principles to be the best corporate parent we can, as we would want to be for our children.


Havering's vision

Our vision to be the best corporate parent aligns with the council's vision of creating a borough that is **cleaner, safer, and prouder together**.

 We want all our young people to feel they are **safe** at home, at school, and in all manner of public spaces. Overwhelmingly, when talking to young people about this strategy, this is what they told us was most important to them.

 We want our borough to be a **clean** area with accessible services and spaces for our young people that feel like their own. Where possible we want young people to live in their borough, not some distance away, so they can benefit from these spaces.

 We want our young people to know that we take **pride** in them and to feel **proud** of themselves and the communities they are from. As a corporate parent, we should acknowledge and celebrate their successes and ensure their voices are heard in the borough's independent review into racism.

 We want to support young people to stay **together** with their families whenever it is safe to do so, and when it is not, we will work better **together** to meet their needs and aspirations.

This strategy sets out the commitment of Havering Council, and explains how we will be a competent and trustworthy corporate parent for any child or young person who is in our care irrespective of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, faith or disability.

Our vision and our strategy extends to those leaving care. We shall also ensure our young people receive quality advice and support as they leave care at 25 years old and become independent members of society.

Local context

To achieve our vision, we must fully understand the position of the current service so that our actions are targeted at the areas of most need and that we predict future challenges, proactively preparing for them to establish a resilient offer for our young people.

We have seen an increase of young people for whom Havering had a corporate parental responsibility from 433 in March 2019 to 469 in March 2020 (239 of which are care leavers). Nationally, the number of children in the care of local authorities rose 28% over the last ten years.

Profile of our children in care

Children who cannot be placed with a parent or someone with parental responsibility must be placed with an approved foster carer, with preference given to someone who is a family member, friend or other person connected with the child who is also an approved foster carer. The diagram below shows that most of the children in our care live with foster carers or family/friends placement.

Where do our young people live

As of 31st March 2020 we have corporate parenting responsibility for 469 children and young people.



26% live in semi-independent or supported accommodation



44% are female and 56% are male



37% live with foster families (inc. Staying Put arrangements)



51% identify as Black, Asian, Mixed Race or from Minority Ethnic backgrounds

Local context cont'd

We have an army of treasured carers who provide stability, support and care for our most vulnerable children. The council provides financial, social and personal support to foster carers to ensure they offer children the best possible care and opportunities to our children and young people.

A significant number of children live in residential or “semi-independent” accommodation which for young adults means bridging the gap between childhood and adulthood, so they are prepared for the challenges of living independently. There has been a continuous change in the ethnic makeup of children in our care. While Havering has an 84% White British population, half of the children in our care are from ethnic minority groups. We must recognise this by offering space for young people to learn and celebrate their cultural heritage.

Changes to legislation and funding arrangements for local authorities has meant that we have to do more with less. The coronavirus pandemic has also presented challenges to local authorities and its partners and, at the time of drafting the strategy, the impact on the mental wellbeing and long term prospects of young people in our care are not fully known.

Within this context, we recognise that we must provide our young people with the best possible care by being innovative, hearing their thoughts, wishes and feelings and finding new ways to meet their needs while providing excellent value. Ensuring support is personalised and allowing young people the opportunity to have control can improve outcomes while also reducing costs. This will require co-operation across services and partners, clear evaluations of projects to ensure that products are resulting in the outcomes expected, and rethinking how we provide services for our young people.



Care experienced young people celebrating the anniversary of The Cocoon.

Priorities



Care experienced young people celebrating the anniversary of The Cocoon.

Based on what we know of our children in care, using data and listening to their thoughts and feelings we have prioritised a number of areas which this strategy will deliver. These priorities will also deliver the government’s seven principles as outlined above.

In order to achieve our vision to be a good corporate parent we have identified six main priority areas that this strategy will deliver:

- 1** Every young person should feel safe in their homes, schools, and public spaces.
- 2** Hear the voice of young people more, to better develop our services and the care young people receive.
- 3** For every child to have a caring home.
- 4** To provide aspiration, an excellent education, and opportunities for employment and learning for life.
- 5** A clear and shared picture of our service.
- 6** Excellent health outcomes for our children (explicitly mental health).

Priority 1 - Keeping our children safe

Every young person should feel safe in their homes, schools, and public spaces



How we will deliver this priority:

- ✓ We will work with schools to ensure that children in care are not permanently excluded from mainstream education or if exclusion is necessary to ensure a smooth transition to a school that is Good or Outstanding.
- ✓ Ensure children in care, and care leavers are at the forefront of the development of our contextual approach to safeguarding young people, to protect them from exploitation.
- ✓ Provide training to all Councillors and bespoke training for members of the corporate parenting panel, to specifically include adolescent safeguarding and exploitation.
- ✓ When anti-social and/or criminal activity involves children or young people, we will seek to understand and tackle the root causes and explore restorative approaches.



Feeling safe isn't just a physical thing, it's emotional too.

Quote from one of our young people



Priority 2 - Hear young people

Hear the voice of young people to better develop our services and the care young people receive



Roti making demonstration from charity trip to India for children in care.

How we will deliver this priority:

- ✓ Involve our young people in the design and commissioning of services as well as assessing the quality of care they receive.
- ✓ Work with children and young people to create a “pledge” of commitments, from us to them.
- ✓ Co-produce a children in care and care leavers “offer” with our young people, for our young people.
- ✓ Ensure a children in care ‘takeover’ of at least one corporate parenting board per year, ensuring that senior leaders hear their perspective.
- ✓ Work with our young people to co-produce ‘top tips’ on corporate parenting, involving young people delivering to staff across the organisation and senior leaders.
- ✓ Give our black, asian and minority ethnic (BAME) care experienced children a voice in services we develop and the care we offer, which reflects and celebrates their culture and heritage.

Priority 3 - Caring home for all

Every child to have a caring home

How we will deliver this priority:

- ✓ We will offer every care leaver the option of a council property or private rental.
- ✓ Develop a robust quality monitoring and accountability process to ensure commissioned providers are working in accordance with the seven principles of corporate parenting.
- ✓ House young people in borough whenever it is possible.
- ✓ Increase local options for alternative homes by increasing the number of Havering foster carers.
- ✓ Work with birth families who (with the right support) can be united with and care for their own children.



I remember when I first saw my bed at my carer's house – I'd never had my own bed, I always shared a bed with my sister.



Quote from one of our young people



Priority 4 - Aspiration, education and opportunity

To provide aspiration, an excellent education, and opportunities for employment and learning for life



Young people receiving their awards.

How we will deliver this priority:

- ✓ Ensure all our children attend a ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ school, and if not, they should only remain at the school because it is in their best interests.
- ✓ We will celebrate success by holding a virtual school graduation and other celebratory events.
- ✓ Develop a mentoring program to offer support, foster aspiration and promote best interest of children in our care.
- ✓ Ensure the right support is in place during transition periods between primary and secondary school, and between secondary school and sixth form, or college.
- ✓ When special educational needs are identified, we will ensure an education, health, and care plan is in place within 20 weeks.
- ✓ To contribute to the council’s Social Values Strategy by supporting all our young people to build social capital through apprenticeships and work experience with the council and our partners.

Priority 5 - Understanding our service

A clear and shared picture of our service



We really like the way you have kept in touch during lockdown – we can't wait to make biscuits at the Virtual Youth Club! And the fact that we are asked what activities we would like to do, means a lot, especially as we know we have been listened too, because what we say, happens.



Quote from one of our young people

How we will deliver this priority:

- ✓ Develop clear data sharing procedures to ensure information is shared between relevant partners such as schools, local healthcare providers, and the police.
- ✓ Ensure information is regularly shared with other departments to inform their planning and sufficiency strategies.
- ✓ Robust recording process for a wide range of outcomes including health, criminality, education, and housing.
- ✓ Record feedback from young people, clearly showing how we responded to it; holding an annual, 'you said we did session' with the children in care council.
- ✓ Increase the variety of services represented at the corporate parenting board to create a multi-agency panel support.
- ✓ Engage the council and its partners to deliver the priorities in this strategy via working groups, including officers from the borough's Regeneration team and Joint Venture partner Wates Residential to deliver social value.

Priority 6 - Excellent health outcomes

Excellent health outcomes for our children



Children In Care preparing for their trip to India, taken outside Havering Town Hall.

How we will deliver this priority:

- ✓ Ensure timely and appropriate access to mental health and wellbeing services for children and young people, especially those with specific health needs.
- ✓ All young people to have regular and timely health and dental checks.
- ✓ All those working with children in our care to act as advocates and promote their best interests in relation to physical and mental health, including up to date and timely health records.
- ✓ Health passport for young people to be up to date and timely.

Making it happen

Havering's corporate parenting strategy will be formally agreed by the Council's Cabinet and responsibility for its implementation will be delegated to the corporate parenting panel. To ensure it is fully equipped to deliver our ambition the panel will contain representatives from a variety of service areas alongside children's services. Four working groups will be established, terms of reference formed and action plans agreed to deliver the principles and priorities in this strategy, along the following themes:

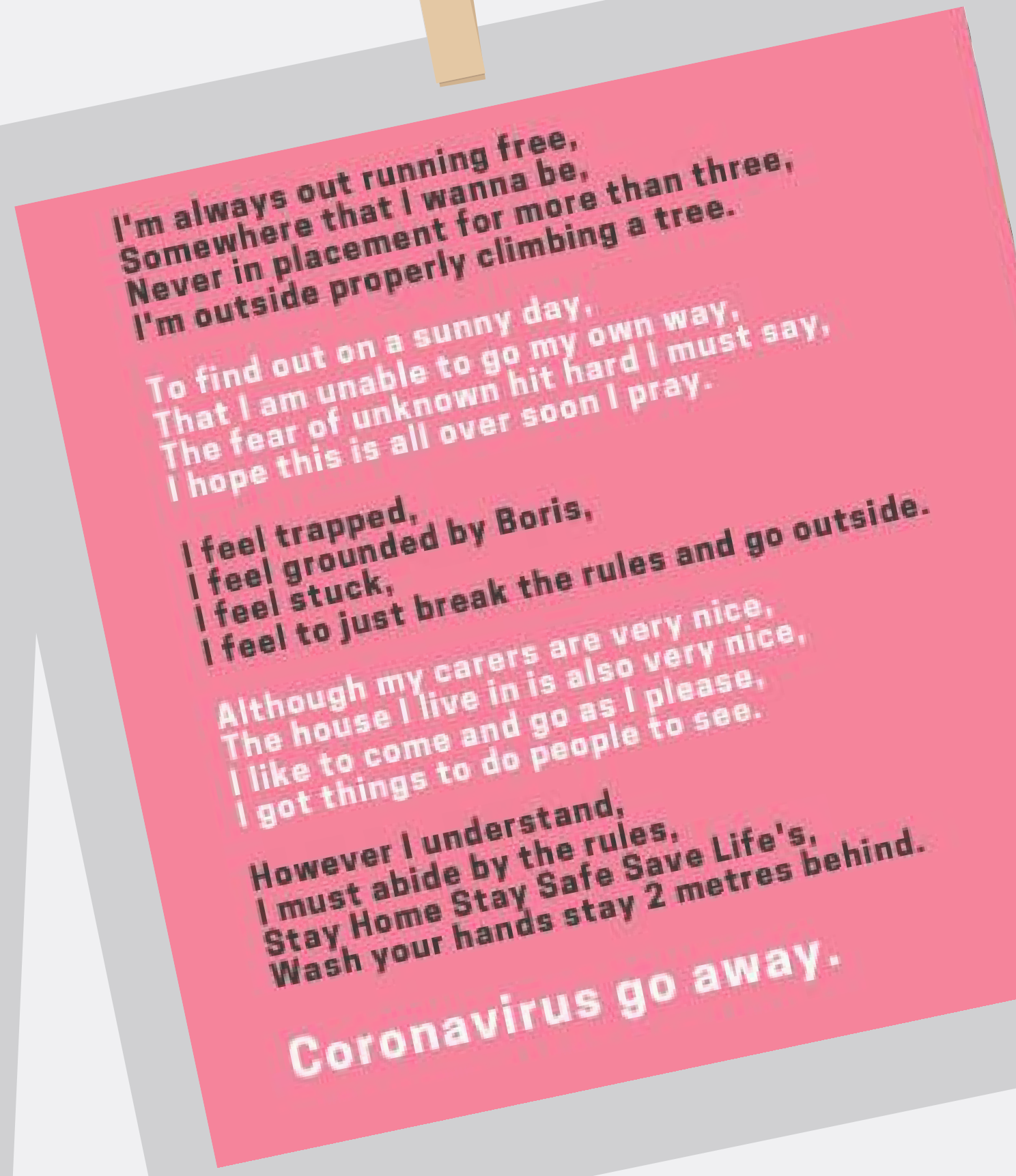
- Health (incorporating mental health and emotional wellbeing)
- Accommodation
- Aspiration, education, employment and learning for life
- Participation and involvement of young people.

The voice of children and young adults will be paramount to the delivery of the strategy and the borough's two Children In Care Councils, the borough's Youth Management Team and Youth Councils will all guide our engagement.

The strategy will be agreed by the local authority's senior leadership team, to ensure that all departments of the council are aware of their duty towards our young people and that the strategy is deployed strategically across all services.

A key initial task will be for a pledge to be agreed, whereby children in care and care leavers work with the local authority and its partners to summarise and agree the expectations of the local authority in delivering its vision to be the best corporate parent.

This strategy will be reviewed in early 2023 to measure its success and to develop a new set of priorities that are relevant at that time.





"I remember being told about the carer that I was going to stay with – her patience and care made the world of difference to me."

Quote from one of our young people



"After coming into care my confidence grew and I made more friends."

Quote from one of our young people



"I worry that all the people that have been supporting me, will suddenly not be there."

Quote from one of our young people

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