

Royal Borough of Greenwich

Corporate Parenting Partnership Strategy

2023-2025





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Foreword

Lead Member

Children in our care and care leavers are some of the most important people in our society. These young people haven't always had the easiest start to life, so it's vital that we, as staff and as corporate parents, do everything we can to make their lives the best they can be as they grow up. We want to give them what every parent gives their child: opportunity, stability, love. We want them to be happy, to grow and to thrive.

Young people often tell us there are stereotypes about being in care. We know from working with our Children in Care Council that these stereotypes are just not true. This strategy is more than words on some paper, this is us working with and for care experienced young people to show them what they mean to us. It's crucial that we listen to what they tell us and put their voices at the heart of every decision we make.

One of the most important things we can do to support children in our care is to recruit and retain new foster carers, and we are always thinking of new ways to do this – such as offering people who live in Royal Greenwich council tax exemption when they foster with us.

I know I speak for all our staff when I say that we couldn't be prouder of our children and young people in our care. We've worked closely with them on this strategy, learning from them and understanding where we can make improvements for future generations. We want to give every young person the right opportunities, tools and services that help them get to where they want to be once they have grown. As corporate parents, that is the least we can do.

As a Council, we owe it to our young people to build them a happy home in our borough, to act in their best interests and to show them respect. We can do that by taking the principles of our strategy below and putting it into practice with every decision we make.

Cllr Matt Morrow
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People



Director of Children Services

Begin well, develop well, and move into adulthood well. That is the vision we set out for all young people in Royal Greenwich, and none more so than children in our care and care leavers. Through this strategy we will do everything we can to give them the best start in life – as any parent would.

It's our duty as corporate parents to do everything we can to support children who are in our care or who are care experienced so they enjoy a safe, happy and healthy upbringing in our care.

Children in our care face unique challenges as they grow up, and it's not fair. As their corporate parents, we will try to even the playing field by giving them the support they need to flourish. Through all our services, we will make sure we prepare our young people for adulthood and give them the tools to succeed.

Even once they have become adults themselves, we still owe them our dedication as they find their feet in the world. More importantly, we will make sure we listen and learn from their experiences, and give them the platform they deserve to grow and thrive.

We're committed to making sure every child reaches their full potential. With children in our care and care experienced children we will always go the extra mile, giving them the love and care they need to help them be the best versions of themselves.



Florence Kroll
Director of Children's Services

Young Person from Child in Care Council

This strategy is very vital for all children in care. It has the opportunity to help improve the lives of children in care and allows them to know different ways in which Royal Greenwich can support care experienced young people's mental and physical health until the age of 25.

It also plays a major role in helping improve the lives of children in care as it supports us in achieving our academic dreams and hopes for the future. This is done by supporting children in care with their education by ensuring that we are in good/outstanding schools and encouraging good attendance.

It's also important for children in care as it allows us to voice our opinions, find our voices and fight for what we believe in.

This is done by offering opportunities such as the Children in Care Council and attending Corporate Parenting Partnership Board meetings which significantly helps develop a young person's voice and allows them to have more opportunities in the future.

It also allows us to express our identity and the strategy pledges to provide support to do this. In order for this all to be done the strategy includes a plan of how to support children in care. This strategy is very important to all children in care as it can support them to thrive and have the best opportunity to thrive in life.



Chloe Ryan

Introduction

Acting as a good corporate parent is to be nurturing, caring and aspirational for all our children in care or those who have left care as young adults.

As well as acting in their best interests and helping them to achieve their ambitions, it is ensuring that they remain safe from harm, are able to become independent and thrive as they move into adulthood.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 outlined the seven key corporate parenting principles which local authorities should put at the centre of their corporate parenting.

These are:

- 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
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living

As well as local authorities, the Children Act 1989 places a duty on partners including health, education and housing services to assist Children's Services in meeting corporate parenting responsibilities by in providing help, support and services to young people.

Local authorities are under a duty (section 10 of the Children Act 2004) to promote co-operation between 'relevant partners' to improve the wellbeing of children in their area. This should include arrangements for children in care and care leavers. Section 10(5) of the 2004 Act

places a duty on partners to co-operate with the local authority in the making of these arrangements, therefore promoting and ensuring a joined-up approach.

This strategy sets out Royal Greenwich's vision and principles, underpinned by the voices of our children in care and care leavers. We will work with young people to ensure we have the right services delivering the right support at the right time to secure good outcomes for them. This strategy has been developed with the views and aspirations of children and young people who are care experienced.



Our Values, Principles and Promise

Royal Greenwich values

Royal Greenwich Children's Services follow corporate values to ensure that we are achieving our goals for children and young people.

As part of each value, there are also a set of behaviours that show how our values can be demonstrated.

These values are:

- improving residents' lives and opportunities
- demonstrating respect and fairness
- taking ownership
- doing things better
- working together across the council



Children's Services Principles

Children's Services can seem complex due to the range of responsibilities and variety of professional cultures.

Each division has its own objectives, referral pathways, overlapping boundaries, and interface with the wider children's partnership, which has an even broader variety of professional cultures. For our work to be effective, work across the directorate needs to be underpinned by a shared set of principles and values. Our principles were developed in partnership with colleagues at all levels of Children's Services.

Children, young people and families are at the heart of everything we do.

We are honest, compassionate and respectful.

We listen, learn and do things better.

We promote diversity, celebrate difference, challenge discrimination and oppression.

We work together, with children, young people, families, carers and our partners to bring about lasting change.

All these values have helped inform our Corporate Parenting Partnership Strategy and will continue to guide the actions that we take to help achieve our overall objectives and improve outcomes for children and young people in our care and care leavers.

Our vision

Royal Greenwich has high aspirations for the children and young people we care for.

Our vision for care experienced children and young people is the very same for all children and young people in Royal Greenwich. This is set out in our Children and Young People Plan 2020-2024 and the 'Royal Greenwich Promise'.

We know that children in our care and care leavers face additional challenges that non-care-experienced children and young people may not. We want the very best for our children and young people and will ensure that they are provided with strong corporate parenting and high-quality support that will enable them to fulfil their aspirations.

Questions Royal Greenwich corporate parents are encouraged to ask themselves:

- what more could we do to ensure children in our care and care leavers feel listened to and their suggestions acted on?
- to what extent are the needs and priorities of children and young people in our care and care leavers reflected in local strategic needs assessments, local service provision, and development plans?
- how can we collectively deliver services to children in our care and care leavers in a way that is joined-up and which supports young people to make a successful transition to adulthood?
- are the children in our care and care leavers enjoying happy, fulfilled childhoods and looking forward to their adult lives, with positive foundations and stable relationships? If not, why not and what can we do to address this?
- how do we know what children in our care and care leavers' wishes and feelings are, and how do we capture their views?
- how can we deliver services to children in our care and care leavers in a way that mirrors, as far as possible, the way a good parent would support their child?
- how can we deliver services in a way that recognises the unique circumstances of children in our care and care leavers?

Our Promise

The 'Royal Greenwich Promise' is our pledge to children in our care and care leavers about what they can expect from us as good corporate parents.

The Royal Greenwich PROMISE

As your Corporate Parents, this is our promise to you, the children, young people and care leavers we look after.

WE PROMISE TO:



Our partnership and governance arrangements

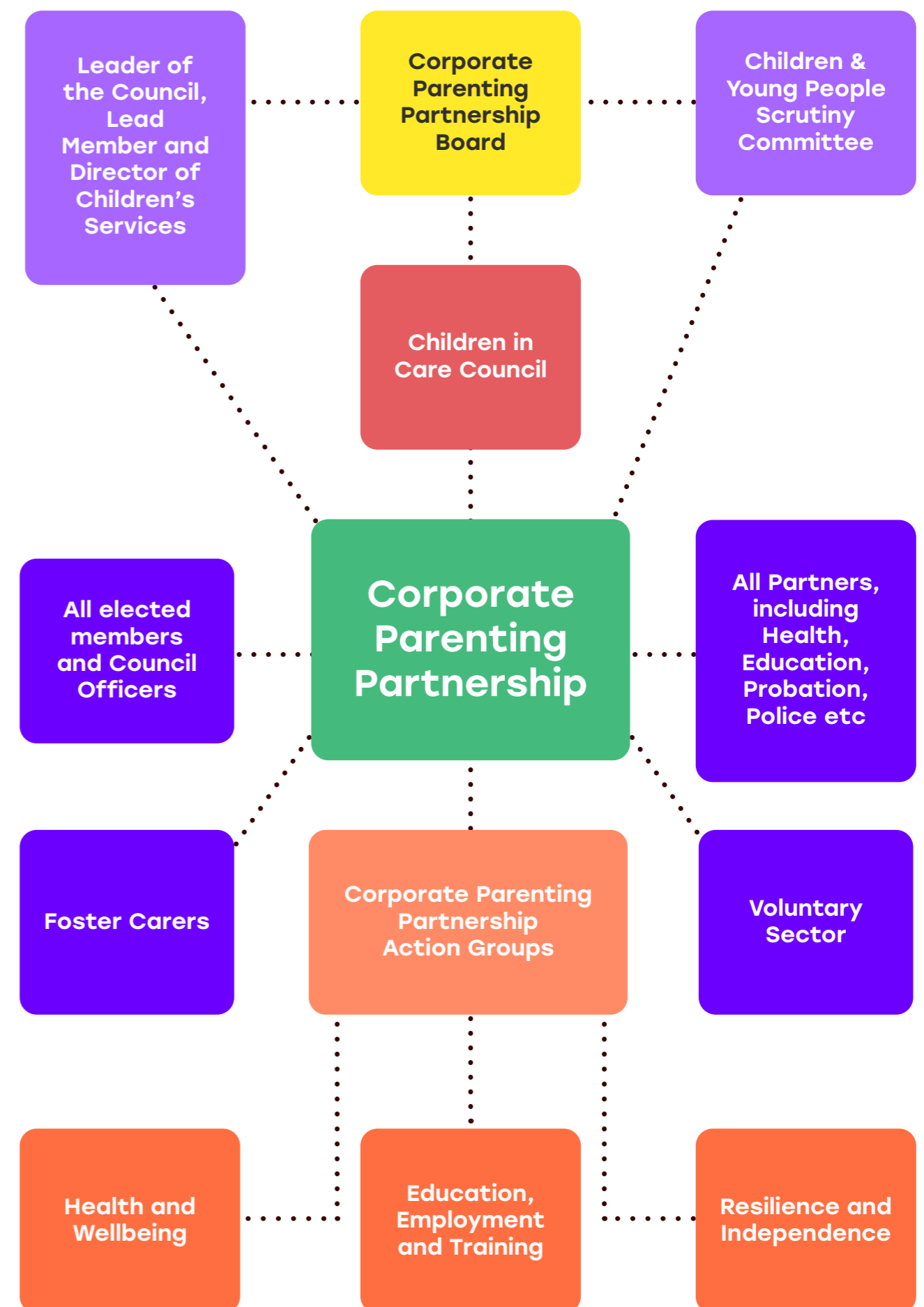
Partnership

The Council and all our corporate parenting partners have high aspirations for our children and young people and care leavers, but recognise that they may require further support as they move from adolescence into young adulthood.

In order for children and young people to meet their full potential, high-quality care, guidance and support needs to be delivered right across the corporate parenting partnership.

Corporate parenting partners include: carers; our Virtual School and education partners; commissioned services; health partners and the police; care experienced children and young people's local communities; our senior leadership; elected members and every council officer.

Everyone has a role to play in this strategy and in the lives and improving outcomes for children in our care and care leavers.



Governance

The diagram below sets out the governance arrangements from our Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee through to the three action groups, all of which have been developed to focus on outcomes for our children in care and care leavers and continuously improve their experience.

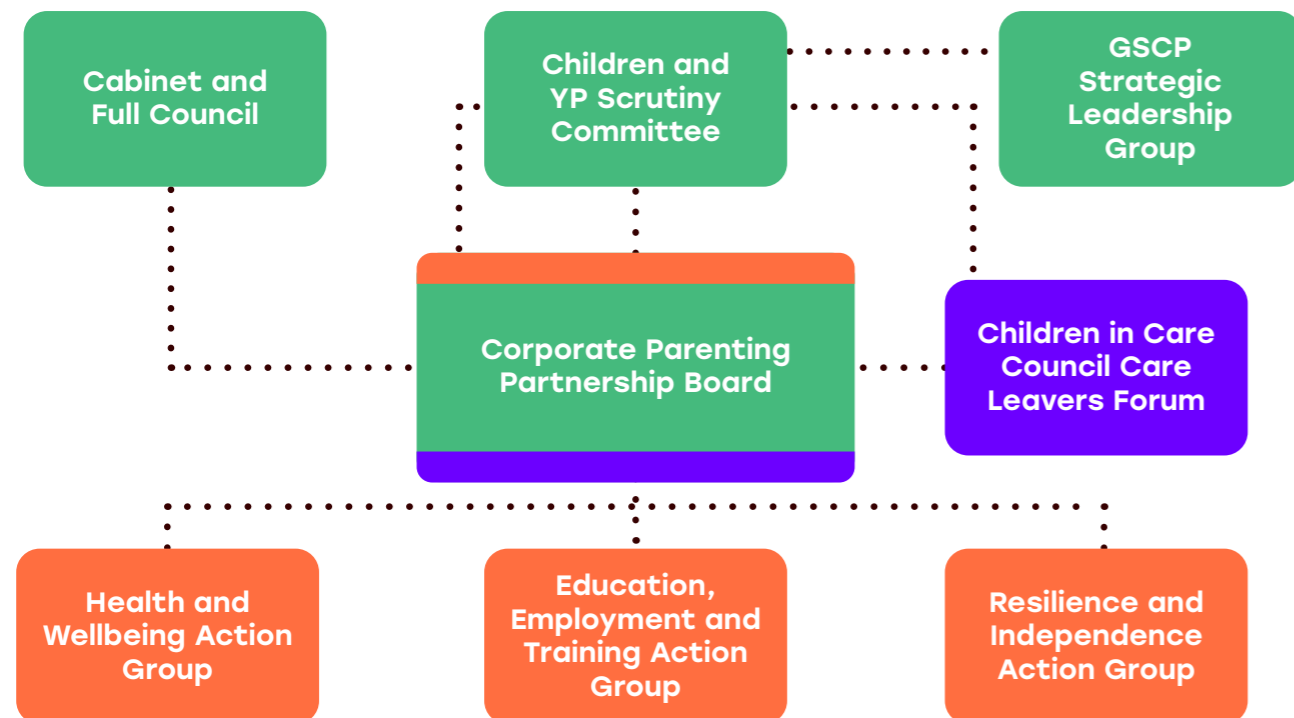
The Corporate Parenting Partnership Board (CPPB) is chaired by the Leader of the Council and co-chaired by a member of the Children in Care Council and will report to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

The CPPB will be responsible for the delivery of the key priorities and its annual plan.

The CPPB will have wide representation including elected members, council officers and partners. It will act as a leadership, decision making, advisory and consultative body to the Council and its partners and will provide constructive challenge and support in ensuring effective and consistent implementation of the corporate parenting duties.

The CPPB Annual Plan will be delivered through the three partnership action groups. The three partnership action groups will each have a strategic director as a sponsor and a separate term of reference. Each action group will provide quarterly progress updates to ensure an active feedback loop and will contribute to statutory and non-statutory annual reports submitted. The annual report will be presented to the GSCP executive partnership group.

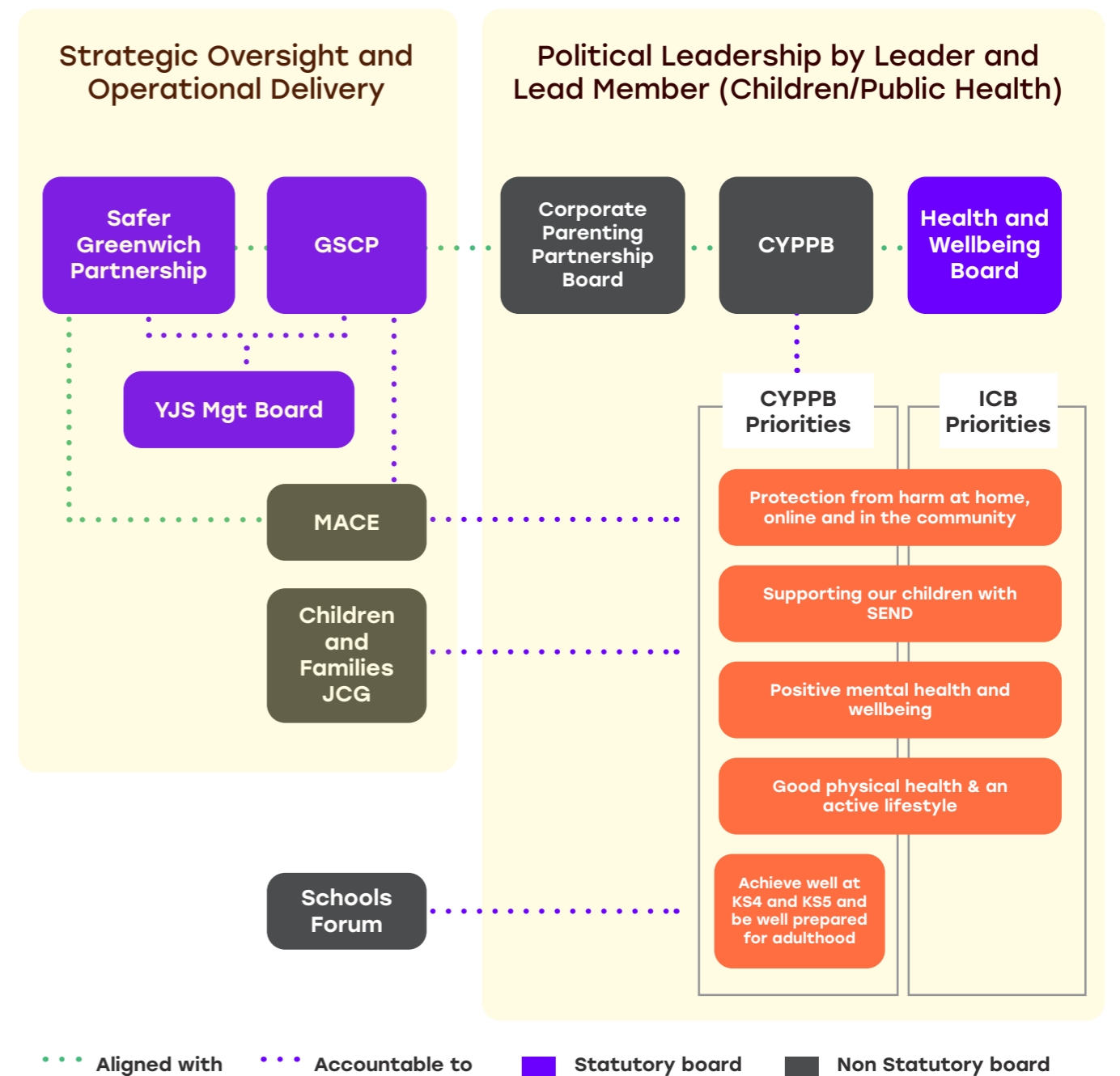
- Senior leaders & Elected members meeting
- Children & Young People's Meeting
- Working Groups



In addition to the partnership and governance arrangements described above, the diagram below displays the strategic interface of the CPPB.

Children's and Young People's Partnership Board - Strategic Interfaces

Cabinet and Full Council aligned to the 'Our Greenwich' Plan



The roles and responsibilities of our councillors, council departments and partners

All those who provide leadership for the support for children in our care need to act as ‘conscious’ corporate parents and understand that they are accountable to the children in our care and care leavers in Royal Greenwich.

We must all strive for children in our care to succeed in the same way that any parent would strive for their own child.

This can mean providing advice and guidance to a young person who is starting to live independently, supporting carers, ensuring that children’s mental health is safeguarded, helping a young person to find a job, or listening to their hopes, dreams, problems and insecurities. There are a wide range of people and organisations who need to work together to make this happen, starting with those at the very top of the Council.

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive provide the political and professional leadership of our corporate parenting commitment. They are accountable through their Cabinet Members and Directors for meeting the commitments set out in Our Promise and for setting the culture of the Council as a conscious and dedicated corporate parent.

All councillors need to be aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities and must:

- have a clear understanding and awareness of the issues for children in care and care leavers
- champion the interests of children in our care and care leavers and ask questions about their outcomes
- listen to children in care and care leavers and ensure that they are consulted with and can influence decisions
- help secure work-based training opportunities, including apprenticeships for care leavers within the Council, its contractors and partners to improve their life chances with rewarding work
- question whether the Council as corporate parent is upholding the Royal Greenwich Promise
- be equally mindful and responsive to children placed out of the borough and demand evidence of positive outcomes
- ask how all elements of our business impacts children in care and care leavers and make connections between plans, strategies, and decision-making for children in care and care leaver
- consistently ask: ‘would this be good enough for my own child?’

“You’ve helped me shape my life for the better and couldn’t imagine being where I am today without you.”

(Young person to her socialworker)



Council departments:

All councillors and officers share corporate parenting responsibilities and council departments cannot abdicate this responsibility.

The most important contribution to corporate parenting is how we as the 'family firm' in all council departments deliver better graduate schemes, employment, apprenticeship, traineeship and work experience opportunities for children in our care and most importantly care leavers up to the age of 25 years.

These opportunities are designed to:

- offer care leaver graduates the opportunities to work in a graduate scheme
- help young people to meet their potential and achieve their ambitions, hopes and aspirations
- help young people become confident individuals and give them the taste of the world of work
- broaden young people's horizons from little or no employment options to a breadth of choice
- help young people to become economically and socially contributing citizens

Children's Services:

Those leading, developing and delivering work in Children's Services are likely to have most important direct contact with children in care and care leavers.

Corporate parenting principles will form part of the staff induction programme. The quality of relationships that young people have with their carers and the professionals closest to them is crucial to their success whilst in and leaving care.

Young people in our care have repeatedly told us about their need for good relationships that provide love, stability and continuity in the home and in learning. Their need to be listened to and involved in decision-making and most of all, their need to be parented like other children, is the basis of our strategy.

The Virtual School:

Our Virtual School for children in our care is responsible for providing leadership, strategic direction and partnership working with schools.

It maintains an overview of all children in our care to ensure they can sustain a school place and that there is support to meet their individual needs.

The relationship between children in our care and poor educational outcomes can be explained in part by the trauma of pre-care experiences such as physical or sexual abuse and neglect. In addition, many children in our care have had gaps in their education, which can sometimes be a continuing significant factor whilst they are looked after. Children in our care are more likely to be excluded from education than their peers. However, the assumption that being looked after leads to poor outcomes is incorrect.

Educational targets for children in care and care leavers are often set too low, are not sufficiently challenging, or the support required for a child who is not attaining educationally is not provided. Accelerated progress targets must reflect our ambition for children in our care, accompanied by targeted support and maximising the pupil premium for every child and young person in our care.



Schools, colleges and other education providers:

They ensure that every Child in our Care has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and is supported to achieve educational success.

Making sure that children in our care and care leavers are in school and working hard to avoid exclusions is an important part of achieving such educational success. All schools should have a designated teacher with special responsibility for children in our care. School governors have statutory responsibilities, which include monitoring the progress made by children in our care. Schools must engage with the Virtual School and respect the role of the corporate parent.

Health service providers:

They have important responsibilities for improving the physical, mental and emotional health of all children in our care.

Health assessments must be undertaken and specialist nurses for children in our care must ensure that Personal Health Plans (health passports) are developed with the child or young person and that they are fully implemented. Transitions to adult health services will be managed sensitively and with full cooperation with young people.

Housing providers:

They have an essential role in providing quality accommodation for care leavers who are ready to live more independently and provide 'move-on' accommodation for care leavers wanting to move from supported accommodation.



Community organisations:

There are a wide range of community organisations across Royal Greenwich who provide important services and support for children in our care and care leavers, including advice and guidance, mentoring, supported housing, and drug and alcohol services.

These services are vital for preventing care leavers from needing the intervention of statutory services.

Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum (CiCC):

We are committed to listening to the views of the children and care leavers we work with and working with them in the design and delivery of services. The CiCC and Care Leavers Forum are key to helping us deliver our Corporate Parenting Partnership Strategy.

The groups will undertake specific tasks and projects on behalf of all our children in our care and care leavers and continue to represent Royal Greenwich at various national forums. CiCC and Care Leavers Forum will play a key role in the recruitment of staff and carers; and contribute to service developments.

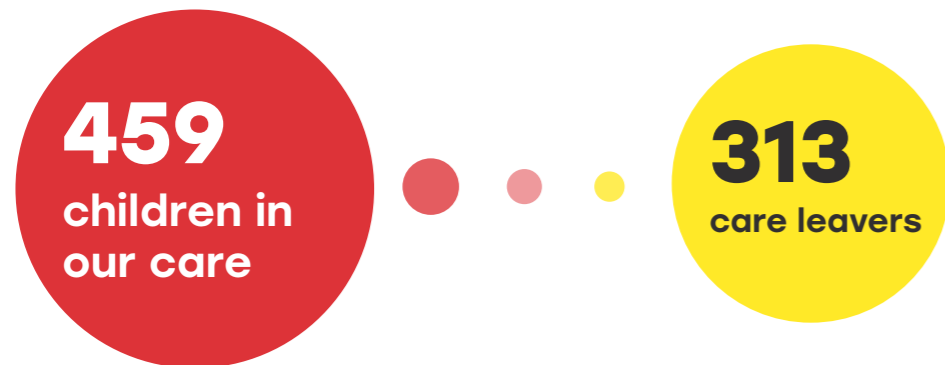
Foster carers:

We value our foster carers and acknowledge the work that they do. We have a strong fostering liaison group, and they will continue to help develop the best care arrangements for our children and young people. We are working with foster carers to strengthen 'staying put'.



Our Local context

Our profile (March 2022)



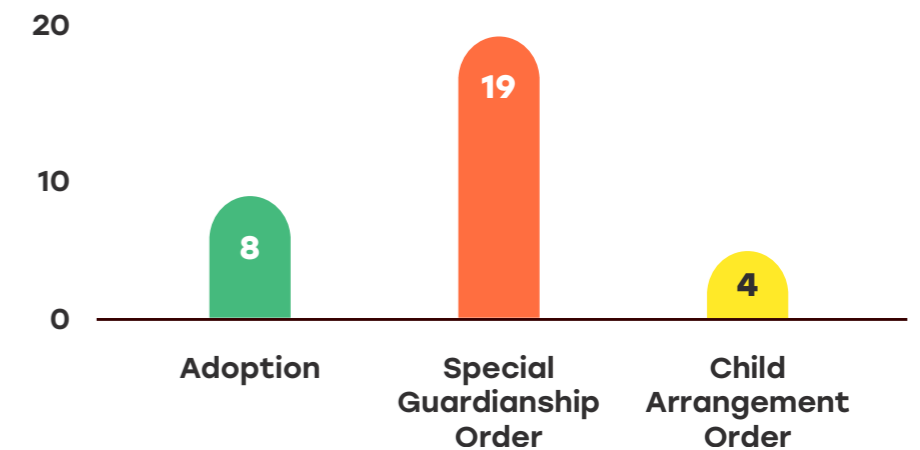
During 2021/2022



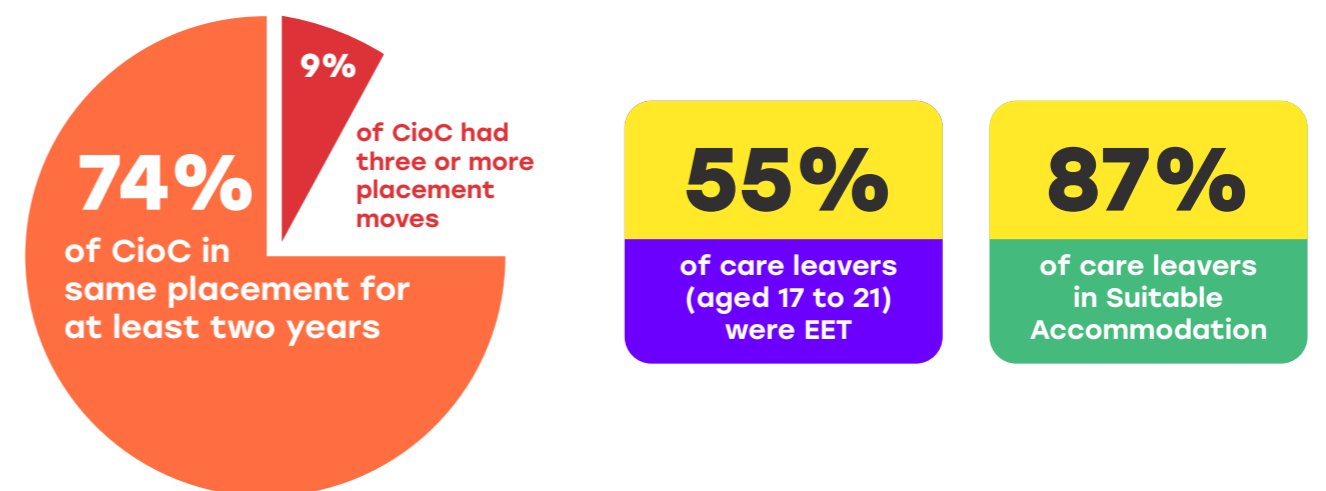
Placement types



Children leaving care through:



Placement Stability



Contextual make up of our CiOC and Care Leavers	CioC	Care Leavers
Male	58%	58%
Female	42%	42%
0-4 (includes unborn)	13%	n/a
5 -10	20%	n/a
11 - 15	36%	n/a
16 -17	31%	2%
18-21	n/a	88%
22-25	n/a	10%
Asian /Asian British	2%	3%
Black / Black British	18%	34%
Mixed / Dual Heritage	20%	12%
White British	49%	32%
Other White	3%	8%
Any Other Ethnic Group	8%	11%



Our ambitions and priorities for 2023-2025

Education

Royal Greenwich and partners to work together to increase the number of children in care and care leavers in employment, education and training. In line with this, partners are encouraged to offer care leavers workplace experiences and apprenticeships.

Our recent achievements:

- overall attendance for all our school aged children was 92.5%
- our NEET has reduced to 20% which is significantly lower than last academic year at 30%
- over 80 children in our care were nominated for awards in October 2022
- the Virtual School has a management board to support the development of the Virtual School
- our Year 7 made good excellent progress and Year 1 and Year 3s made the most progress
- no permanent exclusions in any of our schools in and out borough for over a decade
- over 90% of children attend schools which are either outstanding or good
- number of children not on roll in a school is substantially lower than previous years
- we are enhancing the offer of our UASC to ensure they have opportunities to socialise with peers and support their integration into the community
- we have 30 children and young people who attend our weekly Homework Club
- we are developing a Care Leaver Offer to ensure our different cohorts of young people are further supported and have access to continued support and advice
- we have a total of 28 care leavers currently at university over a three-year period with seven that started in September 2022

Emotional wellbeing and mental health

Continuous focus from the Council and its partners to improve health services and outcomes for children in our care and care leavers, especially in mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Our recent achievements:

- we offer a bursary of up to £150 or one year's Better gym membership to improve their overall health and wellbeing
- we provide ongoing health support for children in our care and care leavers up to the age of 25
- we maintain a close working relationship with health professionals and other agencies to promote the health needs of children in our care and care leavers
- we ensure six monthly/annual health assessments for all children in our care
- we strive for smooth transitions from children's services to adult services - for example, CAMHS to adult mental health services
- we ensure that all young people leaving care receive a health passport summarising their health details, immunisation status, ongoing health needs and key health contacts, for example, GP and dental details
- we provide training to foster carers to raise awareness of children in our care/care leavers' health needs

“I just want to say thanks for everything you have done and helped me with in the past however many years! You have helped me build my future and I look forward to the day I can show you what impact you had in my life. This isn't a goodbye, it's a see you soon!”

(Young person to her socialworker)

Participation

We will support children and young people and care leavers to make their voices heard so that they can influence the decisions and services that affect them. We will also ensure they are treated with respect and dignity at all times.

Our recent achievements:

- we promote a variety groups and opportunities to make sure we increase the number of children and young people engaging in participation activities
- we ensure that participation is diverse, and that activities and programmes are inclusive
- we encourage the engagement of care experienced young people with the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board
- we facilitate training delivered by young people to share their lived experience with Corporate Parents
- majority of young people surveyed believe they have an impact on decision making; and felt respected and valued

Sufficient number of homes for children

Children in our care will have a safe, comfortable and caring place to live and grow up. We will ensure their carers have the right skills to look after them and try to make sure that they are able to live close to the place they were born so that they can maintain important relationships with members of their family.

Our recent achievements:

- through careful matching and support, we make sure that children and young people are living with carers who understand and meet their needs and promote their emotional well-being
- 75% are placed within 20 miles from Royal Greenwich
- 80% of children are placed in family settings including 72% with foster carers (at the end of Q2 2022/23)
- we continue to successfully recruit foster carers
- we revised our placement sufficiency strategy
- we continue to invest in our 'Mockingbird' programme. At the end of March 2022, we had 4 constellations consisting of 36 satellites/families made up from 61 adults supporting 50 children.

Resilience and preparing for independence

We will support young people to develop life skills by the time they leave care, so they can live independently when they become an adult. We will strengthen accommodation pathways for care leavers, particularly those placed within semi-independent provision and their readiness to move on.

Our recent achievements:

- we support children and young people to develop independence early in their lives
- we have a close working relationship with GLLAB (Greenwich Local Labour and Business) and the Woolwich Job Centre Plus (DWP) and ensure we are developing opportunities for care experienced young people to access local apprenticeship schemes
- we ensure that young people have support in all areas, to help them reach their goals and potential
- we support 'Staying Put' where this is appropriate for the young person and access to the supported housing pathway before or after age 18 where appropriate

We have developed a new 'Moving to Adulthood' team to provide a smoother transition for those young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Identity

We will ensure that children and young people know who they are, and why they came to be looked after. We will celebrate the differences that make each one of them unique as people and help them to develop their self-esteem.

Our recent achievements:

- we are committed to helping children and young people to keep a record of major events, achievements, and people in their lives; which includes supporting them with good quality Life Story Work and the award winning CaringLife App
- we encourage children and young people and celebrate their successes
- we promote agreed terminology across the partnership to avoid jargon or language that makes young people feel uncomfortable
- we are committed to practising in a way that respects and celebrates the diversity of our children and young people

Appendix 1

Legislation used

We are careful to implement the reforms that have been introduced by

- The Children & Families Act 2014 and the Adoption and Care Planning amendments (Fostering and Adoption)
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010
- Children Act 1989
- Children (Leaving Care) 2000
- Children and Adoption Act 2006
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Education Act 2002
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption and Fostering) Regulations 2009
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- SEND Code of Practice, 0–25 years 2015
- The Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 (as amended by the Adoption and Care Planning (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2014)
- The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Adoption and Care Planning (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2014
- The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2000

Appendix 2

Membership of Corporate Parenting Partnership Action Groups

Health and Wellbeing Action Group

Director sponsor

- Children in our Care and Care Leavers' Service
- Children In Care Council and Care Leaver
- CAMHS
- Emotional Wellbeing Services
- Healthy Relationships providers
- LAC Health Team
- Representative from Children and Young People's Substance Misuse Service
- Sexual Health Service
- Physical Health
- Health Commissioning
- Integrated Care Board
- Transition to Adulthood service
- Public Health
- Foster Carer
- SEND
- Adults mental health service

Education, Employment and Training Action Group

Director sponsor

- Children in our care and care leavers service
- Children In Care Council
- Care Leavers' Forum
- Youth Justice Service
- Employment Skills and Enterprise
- Personal Advisors
- Virtual School
- Voluntary Sector
- Placement Commissioning
- Job Centre Plus/DWP
- Health
- GLLAB
- Foster carer
- Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) and Young Greenwich

Resilience and Independence Action Group

Director sponsor

- Leaving Care service
- Housing
- Children In Care Council
- Care Leavers Forum
- Youth Justice Service
- Probation
- Adults Social Care
- Transitions to Adult service
- Placement Commissioning
- Foster Carer
- Substance misuse
- Adults Mental Health and Registered Housing providers



