

Enfield Looked After Children Strategy 2018-2021

Scope	The strategy demonstrates how Enfield intends to meet the sufficiency duty and corporate parenting duty as laid down in the Children Act 1989.
Approved by	Corporate Parenting Board
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Document owner – Portfolio Holder	Cllr Achilleas Georgiou - Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Governance Board	Corporate Parenting Board
Review	All partners working to improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers will be held to account for the delivery of this strategy through Enfield's Corporate Parenting Board. The Board will review a report of the measures of success as set out in this strategy on an annual basis, and develop the strategy in response as required.

Introduction

Welcome to Enfield Council's new Looked After Children Strategy which sets out our offer of care to young people for the next three years. As a Councillor, I am determined that we ensure that all our children are safe, confident and happy with the opportunities available to them, to reach their full potential as adults and hopefully contribute positively to life in our borough for many years.

I recognise that, for many reasons, some children cannot live with their families. These children and young people require skilled support from all of us as they journey through their younger years. It is our duty to ensure that those children, who face additional challenge and need to be looked after, receive the highest level of care possible to ensure they are not disadvantaged further.

I believe our corporate parent offer, as illustrated in this strategy, to be amongst the best available anywhere. Our professional staff and the many local people who offer assistance to looked after children are the priceless assets we have in realising our ambitions.

As both provider and coordinator of care, Enfield Council constantly seeks to improve our support for looked after children. To make stronger and more productive links between all stakeholders in order to give the protection and positive environment that all young people deserve.

The new strategy clearly sets out our approach to providing the support looked after children and young people need and deserve. We are committed to do all we can to prevent family breakdown and keep families intact where it is in everyone's interest to do so.

There continues to be national challenges in terms of placement sufficiency. However, where we commission placements for children and young people they will be defined by the needs of the child and, where possible, provide choice to children, young people and their families. We will, of course, continue to focus on monitoring the quality of care provided to ensure that health, education and emotional needs are met.

Our offer will ensure that looked after children and young people are well prepared for their transition into adulthood and we will continue to listen to children and young people's views, wishes and feelings to create the solutions that work best for them.

Underpinning all of this is a commitment to robust and transparent management and monitoring of performance that will measure our success and inform our continuous journey of improvement.

I hope that reading this strategy will allow you to share my belief that we can build further on our strong track record and deliver the very best support to our most vulnerable children and young people.

Cllr Achilleas Georgiou, Cabinet Member Children's Services

Enfield Council

KRATOS

“Working to get the voices of others in care heard”

“We are Enfield’s Children in Care Council who strive to give young people a voice and influence. We are a team of children and young people who are in the care of the Local Authority whom work with social workers, foster carers, councillors and other children in care. We reach out to others in care, supporting them to have a voice and influence others to gain life skills, gain nationally recognised qualification, and become young leaders.

We are very active creating new, fun and educational ways for Enfield’s children in care, those on a child protection plan and those leaving care, to get their voices heard. We are trained peer mentors, we meet regularly to do various activities and train new and old social workers. We have assisted in the making of the ‘health passport’ and have given our input towards this strategy. Our input is invaluable and allows us to participate, learn new skills and become young leaders.”

Our Vision

We want all our children to be safe, confident and happy, with opportunities to achieve through learning and reach their full potential as they become adults, in line with our Children's Plan. The significant majority of children will realise these outcomes living with their family of origin.

Some children and young people will instead benefit from short or long term substitute care, and will be looked after children.

We will be the best corporate parent we can be by:

- Considering the best interests of the child or young person
- Keeping them safe, and fostering stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- Promoting high aspirations and seeking to secure the best outcomes for them
- Promoting their physical and mental health and well-being
- Helping them to access and make the best use of services provided by the local authority and relevant partners
- Encouraging and considering their views, wishes and feelings
- Preparing them for adulthood and independent living.

Relevant Legislation

This strategy will meet our duties under relevant legislation, in particular, by demonstrating how Enfield intends to meet the sufficiency duty and corporate parenting duty as laid down in the **Children Act 1989**. The following additional primary legislation and guidance documents our duties and governs our practice:

- Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1985
- Children Act 2004 (Every Child Matters)
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- If this were my child – A Councillor’s guide to being a good corporate parent 2003
- Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities –Children Act 2004 -updated 2010
- Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers: The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, 2010
- Children and Adoption Act 2006
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children 2010
- Guidance on the Provision of Accommodation for 16 & 17 year old young people who are homeless and/or require accommodation 2010
- Care Planning Review and Regulations 2010
- Promoting the Educational Achievements of Looked After Children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2010
- The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015
- Staying put: arrangements for care leavers aged 18 years and above, DfE, DWP and HMRC Guidance, 2003
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Keep on Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence, DfE, 2016
- Children and Social Work Act 2017

Enfield context

Corporate parenting is the collective responsibility of the whole of Enfield Council and we are committed to being the best corporate parents we can be. We are seeking the same outcomes for our looked after children that any good parent would want for their own children.

Amongst our growing local population, there are increasing levels of poverty and deprivation, and an increasing number of families, children and young people with a range of complex needs. These changes are resulting in a significant increase in referrals into the 'front door' of Children's Social Care. A number of socio-economic factors are at play:

- Indices of Multiple Deprivation, compiled in 2015 by the DCLG, show that Enfield has become more deprived when compared with other London boroughs. Based on these figures, Enfield is the fifth most deprived borough in London and the 13th in England (out of 326 local authority areas).¹
- Median household incomes in Enfield have been declining since 2012, particularly in wards located to the east and south of the borough, where the rates of increasing referrals to Children's Social Care are highest.²
- Welfare reform, including the benefit cap and changes to Local Housing Allowance rent levels, is considered a factor in tenancy instability, increased poverty (despite more people being in work), migration from inner boroughs to outer boroughs and neighbourhood 'churn'.
- There are increasing numbers of statutorily homeless families; families with no recourse to public funds, and unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) needing our support.

Despite these changes and the significant increase in referrals to Children's Social care, the number of looked after children as a proportion of the population are comparatively lower than averages for London, England and other Local Authorities with similar IMD 2015 scores – and are continuing to remain stable over time. Our proactive approach to effective partnership work and our continuing focus on keeping children safe, early intervention and family support help to explain this success.

We are helping families to deal with challenges, embrace opportunities and stay together whenever possible.

We have a skilled and committed children's workforce, supported by a stable leadership team. We have a well-established placement panel process, chaired by the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care, resulting in consistent and proportionate decision-making. Our children in care council, KRATOS, plays a key role in giving children and young people in care a voice and influence over the decisions that affect them.

¹ Under the IMD measure entitled Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)

² CACI estimates

Preventing family breakdown

We will support families to stay together wherever possible. Our focus on building family resilience through good social work, joined up service delivery and tailored support is enabling the majority of children and young people to remain living safely within their family home.

Through our Health and Wellbeing Strategy, we are ensuring that parents and families are able to give children the best start in life by encouraging and enabling early access to antenatal care and promoting healthy lifestyle choices before, during and after pregnancy.

Through our Family Resilience Strategy, we are continuing to commission and provide effective early help services to children and families in the context of rising need and reducing resources.

Our children in need and early help services tackle a range of issues including domestic abuse, substance abuse, sexual exploitation, children missing from home, school absence, family conflict and homelessness. Our services work with families to improve relationships, confidence, mental and physical health, educational achievement and employability.

We are:

- investing and capitalising on the preventive services that are being utilised the most and which demonstrate the best outcomes for the children and young people who require support and intervention
- ensuring our services are easy to access for the children, young people and families who need them
- focussing on even earlier identification and prevention, and reducing the need for escalation through early help services
- empowering more community-led and voluntary services, such as the Parent Engagement Panel, to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- broadening the remit of Enfield's Children's Centres and developing 'Family Hubs', which will provide holistic support for all Enfield families with children of all ages.

How will we measure our success?

- Number of looked after children per 10,000 of the population, in comparison with our statistical neighbours, the London and the national average and in comparison with previous years.
- Rates of persistent absence of children and young people in state funded primary and secondary schools
- Number of children with disabilities whose families are accessing short breaks
- Number of children and young people accessing support from the Family Accommodation and Support Team

- Number of children and young people accessing support from the Child Sexual Exploitation Prevention Team
- SMART Targets to measure success have been agreed and are in the LAC Strategy action plan.

Commissioning placements that consider the best interests of the child or young person and keep them safe

Providing the best placement for each child, in the right place, at the right time, is crucial in securing stability and acquiring the best outcomes for children. We will secure sufficient accommodation for all of our looked after children.

We aim to achieve permanence for our looked after children, in order to achieve stability in their home lives and relationships. Permanence can be reached through different pathways:

- A return to birth parents
- Shared care arrangements
- Permanence within the looked after system: family and friends care, a residential placement, or long-term unrelated foster care
- Legal permanence through adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangement orders.

We will consider looked after children's family and friends as potential carers first. Family and friends carers, also known as connected persons, are encouraged to secure legal permanence for the young person by obtaining a legal order such as adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement order.

When staying within the family network is not in the child's interest, we will progress options outside of the family. We aim to place our children, whenever appropriate, with their sibling, and within their community. In most cases, we will place children locally. In other cases, the best placement for the individual child or young person will be further afield.

We will ensure effective commissioning and monitoring of all services to achieve the best possible outcomes for looked after children, while also securing value for money. We will do our best to give children and young people a choice in their own foster carer or placement. When we identify a planned placement, we will give the child or young person good information about their placement and a good introduction to their carer. A named social worker will continue to support them throughout their placement.

Foster Placements

We place the majority of our looked after children with foster carers, aiming to match them with the right people first time. This means finding a placement that meets the child or young person's specific needs, including consideration of their gender, age, sexuality, religion, race, disability and cultural background.

To do this, we need to have an effective approach to recruiting a diverse mix of high quality foster carers. Enfield, as is the case nationally, faces a shortage of foster carers, accompanied by an increase in the complex needs of children and young

people coming into care. We are in direct competition with independent foster care agencies who actively seek to recruit carers in the local area.

We are continuing to develop our in-house foster service, both in terms of capacity and skill mix. The majority of our looked after children are looked after by these foster carers.

Residential, semi-independent and secure placements

The majority of our looked after children thrive with their foster carers - more of our looked after children have longer placements and experience fewer placement moves than the England average. However, we know that foster care is not suitable for everyone and alternative living arrangements will be the more appropriate option for some children and young people.

Where fostering is not appropriate, we will place children and young people into residential, supported semi-independent, or specialist placements. As with foster care placements, this means finding a placement that meets the child or young person's specific needs, including consideration of their gender, sexuality, religion, race, disability and cultural background. Where a residential placement has been assessed as being successful and it is in the child's best interest we will endeavour to keep the child or young person in that placement.

There is a national shortage of these types of placement, which means finding the best possible placement for children and young people requiring this type of provision is challenging.

We are:

- implementing our Fostering, Marketing and Recruitment Strategy, to recruit sufficient numbers of foster carers who will meet the needs of our looked after children population (including by responding to the changing demographics of children and young people coming into care).
- ensuring we retain and develop our foster carers by providing the best support and access to high quality training, information and guidance to guarantee our foster carers are well equipped and to maximise job satisfaction
- providing therapeutic support to foster carers where placements are fragile, via our Instep Scheme
- working with the North London Adoption, Fostering and Special Guardianship Consortium to develop placement provision based on requirements across the partnership. This includes developing more Parent and Child assessment foster placements, Foster to Adopt Placements, emergency residential placements for young people with challenging or complex needs, and residential placement for young people on the edge of care.

How will we measure our success?

- Performance against targets for foster carer recruitment
- % of potential carers coming forward who have at least one spare bedroom

- % of looked after children who are in residential accommodation; in foster care; or in other placement types
- % of looked after children who are with family or friends carers or with our in-house foster carers
- % of children looked after at 31 March with three or more placements during the year (Stability of placements of looked after children: number of moves)
- % of children looked after looked after continuously for 2.5 years and living in the same placement for at least 2 years (Stability of placements of looked after children: length of placement)
- The number of looked after children who were adopted or where an Special Guardianship Order (SGO) was granted during the year as a percentage of the number of children Looked after who had been Looked after for 6 months or more
- Workforce quality: % of vacant posts in Looked After Children and Leaving Care Teams and in the Fostering Service
- Workforce quality: Turnover rate of social workers in Looked After Children and Leaving Care Teams and in the Fostering Service
- SMART Targets to measure success have been agreed and are in the LAC Strategy action plan.

Improving education, health and wellbeing for looked after children and young people

We are committed to ensuring our looked after children have the best possible physical, mental and emotional health, and education that they possibly can have. We will promote their physical and mental health and wellbeing, promote high aspirations, and foster stability in their education.

Our promise to children in care or leaving care, Enfield's Pledge, includes our commitment to:

- let looked after children and young people know about free activities in the area where they live
- work together to support their educational success and their future
- give them clear information about the support they can expect if they choose further or higher education.

Education

Although many looked after children and young people achieve good outcomes at school, national evidence shows that looked after children tend to not do as well at school as their peers. This can limit further education and employment opportunities. Our looked after children deserve education that encourages high aspirations and individual achievement. We will work in partnership to minimise any disruption being in care could potentially have on their education.

Our aim is to close the gap between the educational achievements of looked after children, and that of their peers. Schools in the borough are mostly high performing with the majority being 'good' or 'outstanding'. A high percentage of our looked after children, attend a good or outstanding school, either in Enfield or in another borough. Our virtual school head teacher supports individual children and young people in their school setting to improve outcomes.

Our multi-agency Health and Education Access and Resources Team (HEART service), which includes social care and health professionals, offers individual therapy and support to improve educational attainment and access to employment opportunities for children in care.

Overall, the numbers of care leavers in Enfield pursuing further education is higher than the England average, and our number of care leavers who are not in education, employment and training is lower than averages for London, our statistical neighbours and England.

To ensure the best possible educational outcomes for looked after children and young people we are:

- ensuring all our looked after children, as priority, are placed in 'good' or 'outstanding' schools where school provision best suits them

- completing detailed personal education plans and, where appropriate, education, health and care plans, for every looked after child and young person which reflect their own goals and aspirations
- reducing delays for educational psychologist assessments
- addressing the specific issues looked after children, who are placed out of borough, may face in accessing timely local support and intervention to meet their needs
- commissioning placements that are supporting our young people to achieve, in line with service specifications
- keeping disruption such as school provision changes and exclusions to a minimum by obtaining the right fit first time for long term placements including out of borough arrangements
- tackling issues which have been proven to be prominent for many looked after children, such as bullying, through education and workshops
- providing training and support to all professionals working with looked after children and young people so that they have the skills and confidence to meet their specific needs

To ensure the best possible educational outcomes for care leavers we are:

- completing detailed pathway plans for every care leaver which are co-produced with young people
- working with partners to increase the range of available education and employment opportunities for young people leaving care
- supporting care leavers to remain living with their former foster carer/s where possible, in line with Government's "Staying Put" framework.

How will we measure our success?

- % of looked after children with up to date personal education plans
- % of care leavers with up to date pathway plans
- Looked after children receive bespoke support/ intervention from the Virtual School.
- % of looked after children attending 'good' or 'outstanding' schools.
- % of looked after children who have had one or more fixed term exclusions
- Number of looked after children who have been permanently excluded
- % of looked after children in education, employment or training
- Annual report completed by Virtual head Teacher on quality of personal education plans, outcomes achieved for looked after children and partnership performance
- Feedback from young people is that their needs and aspirations are being considered, and they feel that they are being adequately supported to achieve their full potential. This feedback will be gathered directly from young people by the looked after children's participation officer.
- SMART Targets to measure success have been agreed and are in the LAC Strategy action plan.

Health and Wellbeing

Looked after children have many of the same health issues as their peers, but they often experience these issues to a greater degree. This can result in poorer levels of long-term health after they leave care.

We believe that looked after children and young people should expect to have the same opportunities as others, especially when it comes to being healthy and happy. Individual looked after children will have varying levels of need, and we will work collaboratively to offer each and every child the best support we can.

We are:

- supporting all looked after children to have good mental health, as well as good physical health
- completing a full, thorough and timely health assessment with a medical practitioner for all children coming into care, followed by a review health assessment every six months for children under five, and annually for children and young people aged over five
- fast-tracking looked after children for medical appointments for relevant clinical services
- ensuring all looked after children receive all the immunisations that they require
- ensuring all looked after children with mental health concerns are identified and supported by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) HEART Service
- monitoring and improving waiting lists for CAMHS provision for looked after children placed out of borough, in order to improve access to services for these children and young people
- educating all looked after children in living healthy lifestyles and making healthy choices, including by giving information and guidance on emotional and mental health, sexual health, alcohol/substance misuse, healthy eating and recreational activities
- providing young people leaving care with a completed Health Passport, containing details of their medical history.

How will we measure our success?

- % of looked after children who have appropriate health checks (medical and dental checks)
- % of looked after children with up to date immunisations
- % of looked after children entering the Criminal Justice System during the year
- % of looked after children identified as having a substance misuse problem during the year
- % of eligible LAC who have been subject to an SDQ assessment
- SMART Targets to measure success have been agreed and are in the LAC Strategy action plan.

Preparing looked after young people for their transition into adulthood

We will ensure that our looked after children receive the same level of care and support any young person should expect from a reasonable parent, including when the time comes for them to leave care. We know that transitioning into adulthood and independence can be very difficult for many young people. Without the right support during this time, young people are likely to experience poorer long-term outcomes.

We will provide good quality, holistic support, empowering them to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives as independent, self-sufficient adults evidencing signs of success.

We are:

- preparing our looked after children and young people for independence over a sustained period of time before they leave care, and continuing to support them when they leave care, maintaining regular contact
- ensuring our care leavers have safe, stable and suitable accommodation – either in an independent affordable or private rented tenancy, in semi-independent or supported accommodation, or by enabling them to remain with their foster carers under the ‘staying put’ arrangements, whichever is most appropriate for their specific needs
- supporting our care leavers to become financially capable by ensuring they learn money management and budgeting; advising and supporting them in accessing all benefits they are entitled to; advising and supporting them regarding their tenancy and providing them with financial advice
- providing ongoing support through a dedicated, well-trained, and supportive Personal Adviser who can offer personal and tailored guidance
- supporting care leavers into employment, education or training, working closely with our partners including local colleges, Drive Forward and Job Centre Plus for example
- encouraging young people to link in with extended social networks in the local community such as community organisations, their peers, family and friends
- putting in place a ‘Team Around the Care Leaver’ to provide them with support for the first six months of living independently in their own tenancy
- working with our care leavers to produce a ‘passport to independence’ which will evidence that a young person is equipped with life skills such as culinary and budgeting skills. This evidences that the young person has been signposted to access specific services such as health and leisure facilities.
- providing clear and up to date information through the creation of a local offer for care leavers

How will we measure our success?

- % of care leavers who are ‘staying put’ with their foster carer
- % of care leavers in education employment or training
- % of care leavers securing an independent tenancy

- % of care leavers sustaining their tenancy for one year or more
- SMART Targets to measure success have been agreed and are included in the LAC Strategy action plan in the appendix.

Encouraging and considering children and young people's views, wishes and feelings

Involving looked after children and young people in designing and developing services is essential if we want services to be effective and meet their needs. It is also important for young people to know that they can influence the decisions that are made about their lives, and that their views and wishes are fully considered in everything we do.

Enfield's Children in Care Council, KRATOS, plays a key role in giving children and young people in care a voice and influence over the decisions that affect them. Young people are involved in inspecting children's services, recruiting and training new social workers and foster carers and also have the opportunity to become young advisors for other children and young people.

Another way of capturing children and young people's participation is through Mind Of My Own (MOMO). This is an app which gives 8-17yr olds and care leavers the confidence and ability to express their needs. The MOMO service delivers their views to us, pushing their wishes and feelings into the heart of decision making. From the privacy of their phone or computer MOMO helps young people create a statement of their views, wishes and feelings.

We are:

- supporting all looked after children to participate in their looked after children reviews
- supporting all looked after children to access our children's rights advocacy service if they require support with getting their views heard on important decisions about their lives
- supporting all looked after children to influence and improve how services are delivered by facilitating and promoting KRATOS, our children in care council
- supporting KRATOS to promote the services they deliver to Looked After Children by utilising their peer mentoring skills.

How will we measure our success?

- % of looked after children reporting a successful outcome as a result of advocacy support
- % of looked after children engaging in their looked after children review
- % of looked after children and care leavers involved in a participation activity.
- SMART Targets to measure success have been agreed and are in the LAC Strategy action plan.

Measuring success

All partners working to improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers will be held to account for the delivery of this strategy through Enfield's Corporate Parenting Board.

The Board will review a report of the measures of success as set out in this strategy on an annual basis, and develop the strategy in response as required.

Relevant Enfield documents

Context

- Enfield's Children Plan

Safeguarding

- Safeguarding Children Policy (London Child Protection Procedures)
- Safeguarding Children's Board Threshold Guidance
- Child Sexual Exploitation Operating Protocol (London Child Protection Procedures) and Enfield Child Sexual Exploitation Protocol

Early help

- Family Resilience Strategy

Foster carers

- Fostering, Marketing and Recruitment Strategy
- Financial Policy for Enfield Foster Carers
- Fostering regulations processes (Fostering Services Statement of Purpose)

Education, health and wellbeing

- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- SEND Education Strategy and Local Offer
- Strategy for Education
- Joint Protocol for Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked After Children and Young People

Care Leavers

- Leaving Care Strategy
- Staying Put Strategy
- Care Leavers Finance Policy

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