



# CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY 2023 - 2026

February 2023

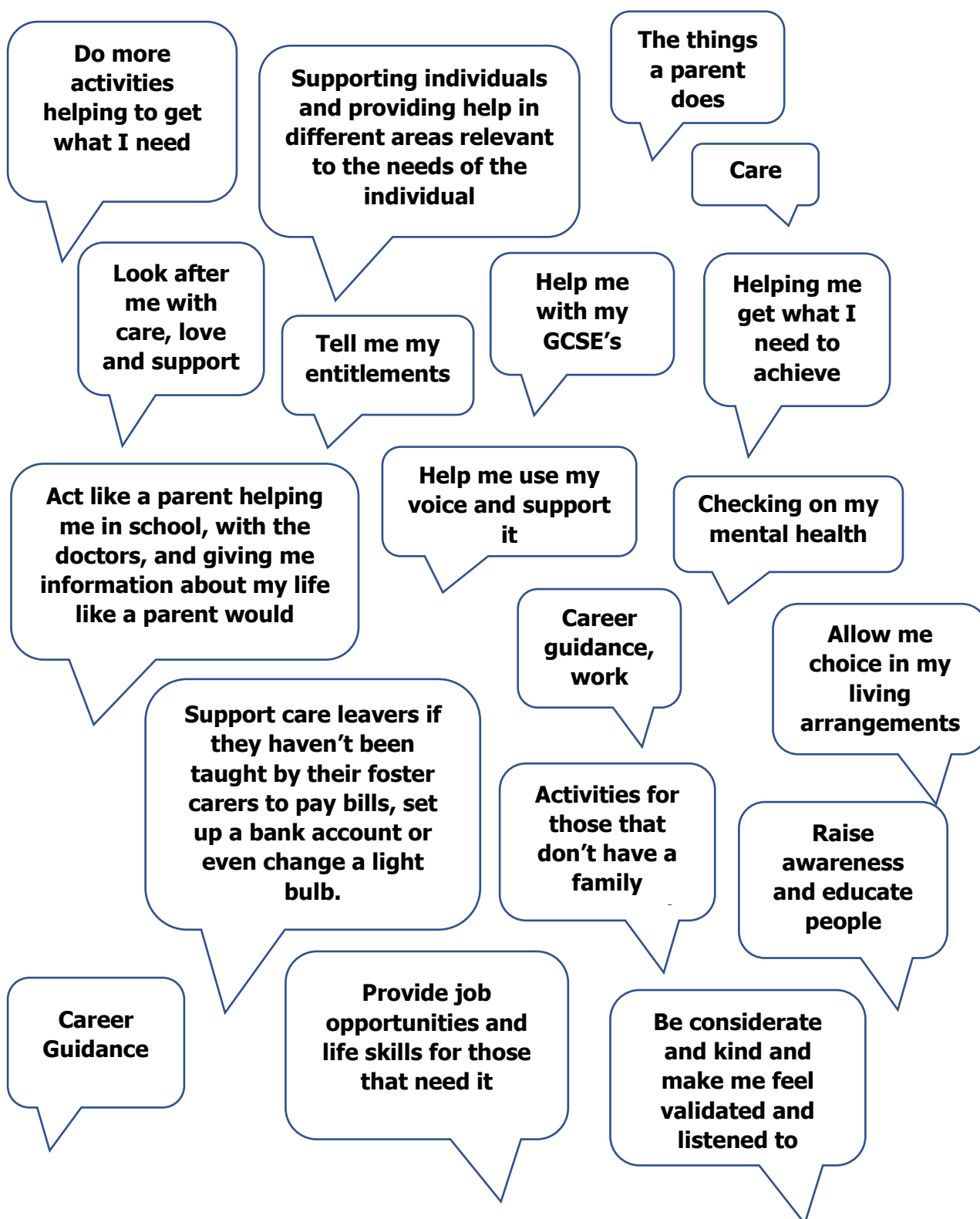


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## Messages from our children and young people

We asked our children and young people what a Corporate Parent should do. This is what they said:



## Forewords

### **Councillor Karen McCarthy, Lead member for Vulnerable Children and Families**



Corporate Parenting is one of the most important parts of my role. Making sure that council services and our corporate partners across the city are working together to support children in our care is a responsibility we cannot take lightly. Every child deserves an opportunity to lead a fulfilling life. That means we have to pay attention to the care they receive, their health, education, emotional wellbeing and in pursuit of their interests. I stand behind the pledges that are set out here and I will be relentless in holding our system to account until we have delivered on our ambitions.

### **Andy Couldrick, Chief Executive, Birmingham Children's Trust**



The role of Corporate Parent is onerous and important, and one we take seriously and personally in Birmingham Children's Trust. We are parents, with our partners in the Council and beyond, to over 2000 children and young people in care, and 1000 care experienced young people. We want to be the best parent we can. This strategy frames how we will achieve this, informed fundamentally by the voices of children and young people in care and care leavers.

'Nothing about you without you' is a mantra we hold dear, and we know that children, young people and young adults will tell us when we're getting things right and when we aren't. We are determined to go on being better parents. This means many things, including enabling children in care to grow up in stable environments, without frequent changes of home, carer or social worker; ensuring as they grow that they get access to the right help and support, to good schools and opportunities to learn and to train; maintaining contact with important people in their lives, and having every possible opportunity and support to become independent, socially connected, economically active, safe, happy adults.

We are committed to being the best we can be.

### **Sue Harrison, Director of Children and Families, Birmingham City Council**



Children in care are among the most vulnerable in our society. As corporate parents we are charged with a responsibility to make sure that they are supported, safe, happy and thriving. To do this we must work together and collaborate effectively with a range of partners across the city. We have listened to our children and young people and what they have told us is central to the pledges we set out here. Through our partnerships and the Corporate Parenting Board we will support our children and young people to take advantage of the range of opportunities our great city has to offer and help them realise their potential.

## Introduction

Corporate parenting is the collective responsibility of all elected members, Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Children's Trust and partner agencies to provide the best possible care and support to children in care and care experienced young people. Birmingham's Corporate Parenting Board brings together all these people to provide a forum for accountability and change.

When a child comes into care the Trust, its partners, the Council and Elected Members become their Corporate Parent. Corporate parenting is therefore our collective responsibility to make sure that children and young people are provided with every opportunity to lead fulfilling lives, in the same way that any good parent would do for their child.

This Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out our ambition for children and young people over the next 3 years and how we will hold ourselves to account. This has been informed by what children and young people have told us. Not one single agency can be responsible for the delivery of this strategy, which is why the signatories include Birmingham City Council, ICB executive board, Birmingham Community Health Care Trust, Forward Thinking Birmingham, Birmingham Children's Services, and the City Council's Director of Children's Services.

## Voice of children and young people

The Board is focused on ensuring the voice of children and young people shapes and influences the Board and its commitments. The 'Take Over' Board that happens twice annually will continue, providing a strong platform for children to hold the Board and its members to account.

For the Board to be effective we need to hear what things are like for children and young people. This is central to the Board, its structure and the impact it needs to have. This strategy is supported by a participation strategy that sets out in more detail how those that receive our services will shape them into the future.

This strategy has been developed, at its core, with children and young people. We have co-produced the strategy via a range of groups that include:

<b>Junior Children in Care Council</b>	Up to the age of 13
<b>Children in Care Council</b>	Young people up to the age of 18
<b>Care Leavers Forum</b>	Care experienced Adults up to the age of 25
<b>Young parents' Project</b>	Young parents various ages
<b>Birmingham Roaring Lions</b>	Forum for disabled young people from our internal children's homes
<b>Don't Dis-Ability</b>	Forum for disabled young people
<b>LGBTQ+</b>	Forum for children who identify as LGBTQ+
<b>Young People Panels</b>	Young people up to the age of 18
<b>Non-White Brits group</b>	Young people up to the age of 18

<b>Safeguarding Parents Forum</b>	Forum for parents and carers
<b>Family Advisory Board</b> (Under creation as part of Child's Journey)	Forum for parents and carers
<b>EMPOWERU</b> (Exploitation and Missing Hub) <b>Parents and Carer's Group</b>	Forum for parents and carers in the Exploitation and Missing Hub
<b>FDAC</b> (Family Drug and Alcohol Court) <b>Substance misuse group</b>	Group for Parents
<b>FDAC Parenting group</b>	Group for Parents
<b>FDAC Emotional wellbeing group</b>	Group for Parents
<b>FDAC Own my life group</b>	Group for Parents
<b>Birmingham Youth Offending Service Forum</b>	Young people up to the age of 17
<b>Foster Carers Birth Children Group</b>	Group for Children
<b>Foster Carer support Groups (City Wide)</b>	Group for Foster Carers
<b>Birmingham Children's Fostering Association (BCFA) Peer Buddies Groups</b>	Group for Foster Carers
<b>Post Adoption Support Teen's Group</b>	Group for Young People
<b>Rise Forum</b>	Young People aged 14 - 19
<b>People for Public Services Forum</b>	Adults Forum
<b>Parent, Carer Forum</b>	Adults Forum

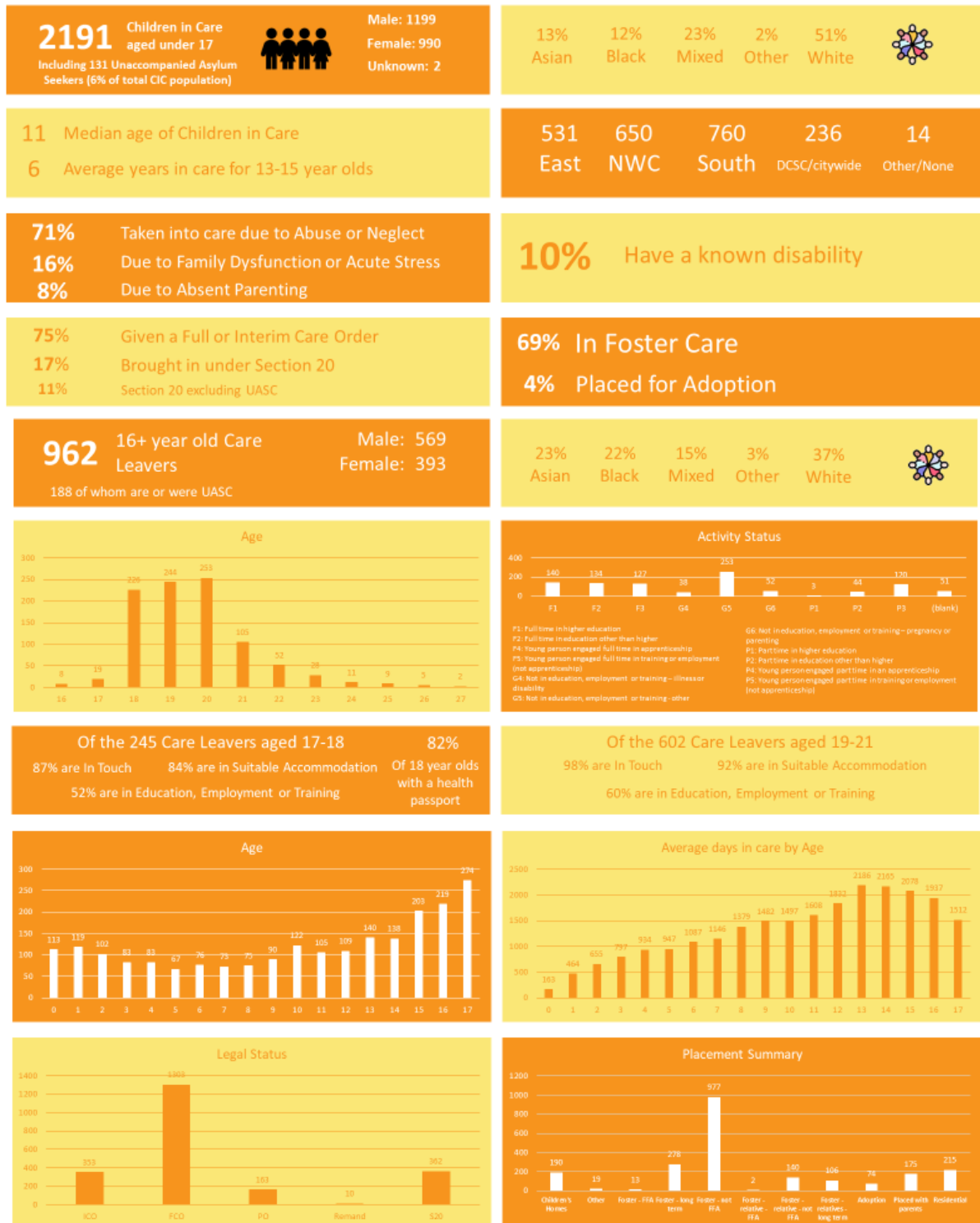
Children and young people are provided many opportunities to be supported in developing their ideas and having their voices heard in the Trust.

They have contributed in a variety of ways by:

- being involved in regional and national consultations like the Care Review and the Regional Care leaver offer programme.
- leading two Take Over Board's that have included themes on mental health, being a young parent, the cost-of-living rises, social work practice, decision-making, relationships, honesty in practice, work and apprenticeships.
- interviewing all of the ASYE cohort, senior Trust staff, YOS workers, TESS practitioners, IROs and residential workers.
- training social workers in the Life Story project.
- delivering conferences to the IRO service.
- presenting at two national conferences.
- contributing to our large remodelling programme "the Children's Journey".
- co-producing the new Trust Practice Standards.

- producing promotional material (including videos) to encourage changes to practice.
- delivering the Mind Your Language campaign focused on improving use of language & communication.
- being part of the redesign of the Perinatal Pathway.
- Co-producing the Personalisation Programme aimed at improving parents' input into their pre and postnatal care (including the training materials to staff).
- delivering online training session at the national Advancing Health Equalities Masterclass (Children in Care themed) for NHS.
- consulting with the Children in Care nurse group on the health of children in care.
- designing the interior space for the TESS new office bases.
- collaborating with the Practice Academy in the production of the new Practice Model.
- consulting on a range of different service led themes including
  - child protection
  - family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC),
  - the regional care leaver offer
  - mentoring programme
  - the Bfriends charity
  - foster carer recruitment campaign
- presenting at VoxCon, the national Annual Mind of My Own Conference.
- designing the Commonwealth Games Volunteer support and benefits offer.
- working with Clive Diaz in developing the "be present" training.

## Local Context

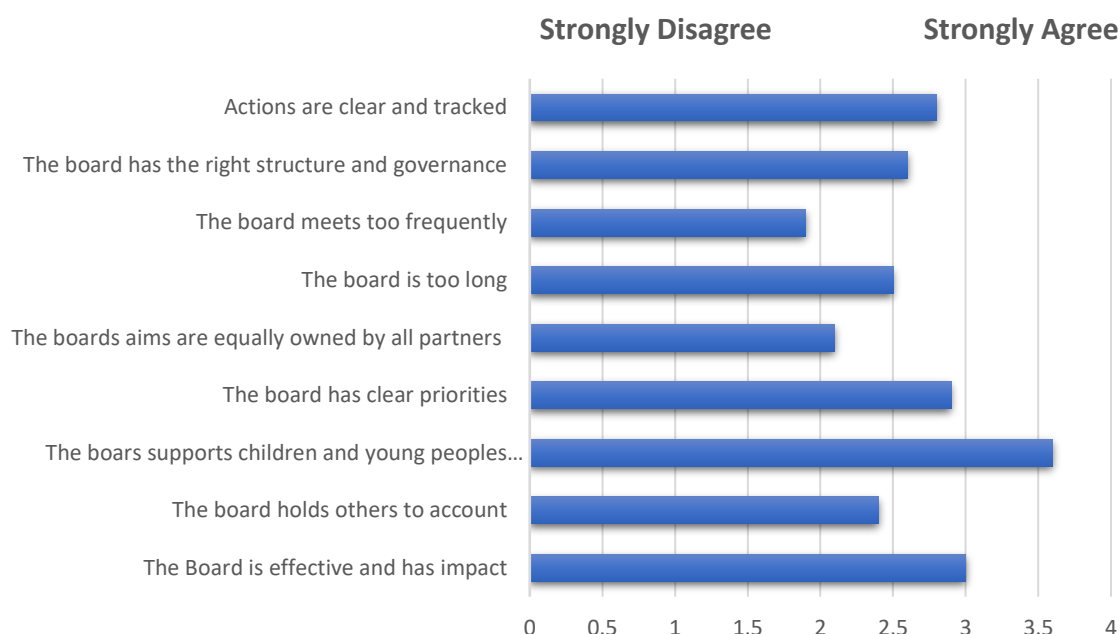




## What our partners have told us

During 2022 we reflected on the progress of the Board and what needed to change to develop and improve the delivery for our children and young people.

This is what our board and its partners told us:



## Key messages from the Board

- Clear 12-month priorities of what the Board needs to deliver on for our children and young people
- Smaller number of higher priority items
- Membership of the Board to be reviewed and include key decision makers and partners
- All partners represented the council the trust, health, education, police, businesses and our children and young people (ownership)
- Key decision makers/agencies taking a lead role for each Pledge
- Stronger role and representation from Birmingham City Council and Elected Members
- At each Board agenda items bring in the voice of children and young people (this needs to have reach and be representative)
- Board members and those invited to accept and invite constructive challenge
- Utilise existing meetings and forums to progress work and priorities of the Board
- Data to be used within the Board to support each Board theme
- Data be used to track performance, improvement, and impact as well as areas of concern

## **Bfriends Charity- adding value**

Bfriends is an independent charity that was established with the support of Birmingham Children's Trust. In February 2023 it will celebrate its first year of operation. Its trustee's include Jacobs, Aston Villa Football Club and Barclays Bank. The aim of the charity is to raise money, access funding opportunities and promote the needs of children and young people across the city. Ultimately the charity aims to add value to the corporate parenting offer across the city. The work of the charity is an important part of the corporate parenting strategy.

Over the next 2 years, with the support of its corporate trustee's and Birmingham Childrens Trust, Bfriends will:

- be the delivery arm of the governments Holiday and Food programme
- deliver a range of celebration and engagement events for children in care and care leavers.
- promote and secure apprenticeship and employment opportunities across Birmingham's corporate sector
- promote the city's corporate parenting responsibilities
- generate funds to become self sufficient

## **The progress we have made**

Over the last 18 months we have achieved a range of successes for care experienced children and young people. Highlights include:

- increasing applications for independent visitors by 400%. Children who need an independent visitor now receive one in a timely way.
- increasing access to advocacy by 60%
- 62% of children are in education, employment and training, which is better than regional and national comparators.
- 9% of care experienced young people in Birmingham left care to go to higher education in 2022 compared to 6% nationally. 18% of our care experienced populations are now at university.
- 35% of children in care achieved 9-4 pass in GCSE English and Maths GCSEs compared to 24% nationally
- 92% of care leavers live in suitable accommodation which remains above the national and statistical neighbour averages. No care leaver has been placed in B&B by the Trust.
- children in our care are stable with circa 70% having been within their placement for 2.5 years+, this is better than regional and national comparators.
- a series of aspirational films, developed by children in care have raised awareness of corporate parenting across the city leading to:
  - Council Tax exemptions for care leavers up to 25.
  - discounted access to leisure passes for use across the city.
  - access to VivUp, the staff benefits portal, which is providing a broad range of discounts across a range of stores and products.

- our Trust Holiday and Food Programme (HAF) hub model has been held up nationally as a model of good practice and has made a difference for over 2500 children and young people across the city who have been given access to sport, activities, and nourishment.
- the care leaver apprenticeship programme has employed over 18 apprentices which is transforming individual lives.

### **Areas for further development**

- We are still, on occasions, using unregulated placements for children under the age of 16 and for 16/17-year-olds who need care as well as support. We want to reduce this to zero.
- We will develop more streamlined and efficient processes to improve the timeliness of initial health assessments when children arrive into our care.
- Dental checks have been a legacy problem from Covid and so now, with normal service levels resuming, we are working with the Integrated Care Board (NHS) to improve children's timely access to dental health.
- We will improve access to mental health services and emotional support for children in care.
- Children in care achieving 9-4 passes in GCSE English is higher than national averages but we will continue to close the gap with their peers.
- 16-18-year-olds who are NEET - the figure is lower than the regional and national averages, but we strive to improve this further.
- We will reduce the number of children in care who receive a Fixed Term Exclusion
- We will improve the quality and choice of housing for our young people
- The rising cost of living is putting undue pressure on our care leavers living independently. We will enhance our published a local offer to help with access to resources and greater support.
- We aim for every child to be working towards their transition to adulthood from at least the age of 16.
- We will create more apprenticeship opportunities right across the city

## Our City Pledge

### Your Voice and Participation

**Lead Agency:** Birmingham Children's Trust

**Executive Sponsor:** David Stringfellow (Birmingham Children's Trust)

**Governance:** Trust Participation Forum

#### **What we will do**

**We will publish a participation strategy that will set out how you will be heard**

**We will ensure that your Social Worker/Personal Advisor involves you in decisions and plans that affects you**

**We will run group so you can shape the organisations you work with**

**We will provide you with an advocate to support you individually**

**We will provide you with access to Mind of My Own so that you can have your say**

**We will focus in 2023 on participation across the Trust**

**We will create more apprenticeships that help to support the voice of children and young people**

#### **How will we know if we are making a difference**

- File audits and Quality Assurance reports will evidence children and young people's voice
- At least 90% of children and young people will participate in their Children in Care reviews
- Peer Research Study in decision-making within child in care reviews will show good practice
- Numbers of children in care and care leavers who have accessed Advocacy will increase by 20% from the figure of 225 in 2021/22
- All children who require an independent visitor will be provided with one
- Every child in care has a Mind of My Own 'This is Me' profile
- There will be a rise in the numbers of Mind of My Own statements from 30-50 a month to 150-200
- There will be more apprentices supporting the voice of children and young people
- Every member of Trust staff will be aware of a child's statutory right to access independent advocacy from the Rights and Participation Service

## Your learning and your future

**Lead Agency:** Birmingham City Council, Children and Families Directorate

**Executive Sponsor:** Cllr Karen McCarthy (Birmingham City Council)

**Governance:** Virtual School Board of Governors

<b>What we will do</b>
<b>We will ensure you have a school place and access to education and training</b>
<b>We will support you to achieve and celebrate your achievements</b>
<b>We will support you with further education and going to university</b>
<b>We will provide you with work experience and apprenticeship opportunities across a range of organisations and businesses that the council, Trust and partners work with</b>
<b>We will support you into employment and jobs</b>
<b>We will provide you the opportunity to have a mentor in school and when you leave school</b>
<b>How will we know if we are making a difference?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Virtual School Child in Care attainment reports will show year on year academic progress</li> <li>- All Children in care will have a school place in line with their PEP and EHCP (where appropriate)</li> <li>- All children in care will have at least 25 hours of provision per week</li> <li>- School attendance will be at least 90%</li> <li>- Reduction to 20% of Children in Care who are NEET 16-18</li> <li>- % of Children with 5+ GCSE 5-9 inc English and Maths to double to 30% by 2026</li> <li>- All children in care will have a personal education plan and EHCP (where necessary)</li> <li>- The Virtual School will develop an UASC newly arrived education offer and education holiday camps</li> <li>- At least 80% of young people between 16-21 will be in education, training, or employment</li> <li>- At least 10% of young people will be in higher education</li> <li>- We will increase the number of children in apprenticeship programmes to at least 50.</li> </ul>

## Your relationships and you

<b>Lead Agency:</b>	<b>Birmingham Children's Trust</b>
<b>Executive Sponsor:</b>	<b>Jenny Turnross (Birmingham Children's Trust)</b>
<b>Governance:</b>	<b>Children in Care Practice Forum</b>

<b>What we will do</b>
<b>We will ensure you see the people in your life that are important to you</b>
<b>We will provide you with a trusted adult you can talk to</b>
<b>We will support you to understand where you are from and your life story</b>
<b>We will positively promote your social contact with peers including clubs and activities</b>
<b>We will support our young parents with their children</b>
<b>We will ensure our services promote relationship-based practice</b>
<b>We will support you to have an Independent Visitor</b>
<b>We will support you to have a mentor</b>
<b>How will we know if we are making a difference?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All Social workers will have received a young person led relationship-based practice professional development training package, including a mandatory section for new starters</li> <li>- Children's views about contact with family, friends and peers will be discussed at every review</li> <li>- Professionals and carers will positively promote clubs/activities and social contact, and this will be recorded at every review</li> <li>- 10% of young people will have access to the Life-long Links scheme</li> <li>- There will be a rise in Independent Visitors from 1% to 10% by 2026</li> <li>- All children will leave care with their life story work</li> <li>- We will have developed a perinatal pathway and offer to our young parents co-designed with young people</li> <li>- By 2026 there will be 150 mentors 'Develop Me' relationships per year</li> <li>- We will ensure all young parents are invited to join our young parents group and increase membership by 50% by 2026</li> </ul>

## Your Care

**Lead Agency:** Birmingham Children's Trust

**Executive Sponsor:** David Stringfellow (Birmingham Children's Trust)

**Governance:** Children in Care Practice Forum

### What we will do

**We will make sure you have a safe and loving home to live in where carers are well trained and supported**

**We will ensure you have a say in where you live and that you know lots about where you might be moving to**

**We will ensure we know you well and share the positive things about you moving into a new home**

**We will ensure you don't have to keep moving**

**We will ensure that where possible children live with their families or friends, where it is safe to do so**

### How will we know if we are making a difference?

- There will be no children living within unregulated arrangements
- 95% of care leavers will be living within suitable accommodation
- 20% of children in care will be living with family or friends
- Less than 10% of children will live within residential children's homes
- Less than 20% of children will live more than 20 miles from their home address
- 90% of children in care will have been in the same placement for 2.5 years or more
- Less than 10% of children will have had 3 or more placements in previous 12 months
- The Young Person 'This is Me' Profile will be on every child's file
- All children will receive profiles and information on carers who they are moving to
- 20% of children in care will be living with family or friends, if this is what they want
- All children in unregulated placements will be visited by an Advocate and offered a service

## Your housing and independence

<b>Lead Agency:</b>	<b>Birmingham City Council</b>
<b>Executive Sponsor:</b>	<b>Cllr Sharon Thompson (Birmingham City Council)</b>
<b>Governance:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member Meeting</b>

<b>What we will do</b>
<b>We will help prepare you for independence</b>
<b>We will ensure we provide you with a mentor if you want one through our Develop Me programme</b>
<b>We will develop our 'Next Steps' Programme that will support you into independence and when living independently</b>
<b>We will ensure that there is a simple process for you to move into your own home</b>
<b>We will ensure that you have good accommodation to live in when you leave care and that you have a choice where you live</b>
<b>We will publish a Local Offer that clearly sets out your entitlements, support and access to services</b>
<b>We will make sure our Local Offer provides financial support, discounts and savings</b>
<b>How will we know if we are making a difference?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All young people will have a Pathway Plan by the age of 16</li> <li>- All young people will have a Personal Advisor from the age of 16</li> </ul> <p>We will have a 'Next Steps' Programme in place and 30-50 young people will access this in the first year. The 'Develop Me' Programme will focus on supporting 16-25-year-olds living independently with 90% of mentor relationships being targeted in this way</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Care leavers will be receiving Band 1 priority when they are ready for independent living</li> <li>- All care leavers will be accessing Choice Based Lettings (CBL) so there is a choice in the properties bid for</li> <li>- The quality of accommodation allocated will be governed by the current void standard</li> <li>- Your Local Offer will be online and up-to-date and will have current opportunities, support and access to services, as well as financial support, discounts and savings</li> </ul>



## Your Health and Wellbeing

**Lead Agency:** Birmingham ICB

**Executive Sponsor:** Emma Willitts (ICB)

**Governance:** Children in Care Health and Wellbeing Forum

### **What we will do**

**We will ensure you have regular, impactful and high-quality Health Reviews**

**We will ensure you know how to access community health services such as GPs, pharmacists dentists and opticians**

**We will ensure that we work together as a partnership to support you to have timely access to mental health and wellbeing services**

**We will ensure that mental health has an equal consideration to physical health for all children in care and care experienced young people and will be incorporated into care plans at each review**

**We will ensure care leavers have meaningful leaving care summaries and can access them whenever they feel they need to after leaving care**

**We will ensure all young people with care experience will be able to receive free prescriptions, when they are outside of NHS exception eligibility**

**We will ensure our children with disabilities and SEN get the tailored extra support they may need, and they do not have unnecessary assessments and their EHCP's are appropriately updated**

**We will ensure you have access to activities, leisure and hobbies that you enjoy**

### **How will we know if we are making a difference?**

- At least 75% of children will have an Initial Health review within 20 days by 2023
- All children in care will have a Health Assessment annually
- Young people feedback will be gained and used to improve the quality of health assessment with satisfaction rates of 85%
- All children will have visited a dentist in the last 6 months
- Dental care and Oral health will be discussed during health contacts with our children and young people
- The dental pathway information sharing tool project will be piloted in 2023 (feedback will be incorporated into initial and review assessments)
- All children will have strengths and difficulty questionnaires completed annually to help inform health reviews

- Children and young people will have timely access to support their emotional health from Forward Thinking Birmingham (FTB) and/or TESS
- Self-management of health will be part of all transition plans for children in care
- All children leaving care will have a leaving care health passport that is meaningful to them and accessible at any point in their journey post-care
- New Primary care access cards for children in care and care leavers will be given to all children and young people to ensure fast track access within GP practices
- All children in care and care leavers (16-25) will be eligible for free prescriptions
- All children in care will receive as a minimum, an annual screening of their emotional wellbeing using a clinically approved tool to ensure intervention is timely and responsive irrespective of age or where they are placed
- All children and young people who ask for mental health and emotional wellbeing help receive help from services and their concerns are listened to
- We will continue to develop our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker children's clinics to meet their health and mental health needs
- All children will have access to discounted and free activities, holiday programmes and leisure activities
- Free private swimming lesson scheme to be piloted in 2023 for 300 children in care

## Our key actions

- Develop and publish a clear action plan for each of the 6 Pledges to be routinely reported into the Corporate Parenting Board.
- Publish a participation strategy that sets out how we will broaden the range of access for all children and young people in care.
- Review membership of the Corporate Parenting Board to ensure that representation is suitably senior, influential, and aligned to the priority area's set out in this strategy.
- Develop and publish a refined data set that specifically relates to the priority area's set out in this strategy
- Develop a Corporate Parenting Network of City Council and Partners to champion our aspirations across the city
- Develop and promote a schedule of engagement opportunities and awareness raising activity for Birmingham City Councillors
- Published a clear local offer for both children in care and care experienced young people
- Recognise care experience as a protected characteristic within Birmingham City council
- Establish better and more innovative ways to communicate with all of our children in care and care experienced young people.

