

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Corporate Parenting Strategy (CL/2025/04)	
REPORT OF Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Cabinet Council	DATE 2 nd April 2025 7 th April 2025
STRATEGIC CONTEXT <p>We Make Camden is our joint vision for the borough, developed in partnership with our community. Our Corporate Parenting duties towards Camden’s children in care and care-experienced young people relate to a number of our Camden ambitions, including: Camden’s ambition to be a borough where every child has the best start in life; our aim to actively tackle injustice and inequality; and our aim to support good health, wellbeing and connection for everyone in Camden. Care-experienced children and young people are also a priority cohort of our Youth Mission, which aims to have every young person accessing economic opportunity that enables them to be safe and secure by 2030.</p> <p>The Way We Work is the Council’s response to We Make Camden. Our proposed Corporate Parenting Strategy aims to place the voice, needs and aspirations of care-experienced children and young people at the heart of decision-making and to take a cross-council approach to being the best Corporate Parent, which closely aligns with the principles set out in the Way We Work.</p> <p>In Camden, we are deeply committed to ensuring that Camden’s children in care and care-experienced young people are supported, valued, and given every opportunity to thrive, and we aim to reduce the multiple systemic stigmas, disadvantages, and discrimination they have faced. As part of this commitment, Council resolved to treat ‘care experience’ as a locally protected characteristic in January 2024.</p>	
SUMMARY OF REPORT <p>Our Corporate Parenting Strategy (at Appendix 1) outlines our plans for the next three years, from 2025-2028. It focuses on the areas we need to improve and builds on our strengths to ensure that every child and young person in our care feels safe, supported, and proud of who they are. It sets out how we will communicate with care-experienced young people about our plans to provide them with a stable and loving home, as well as the steps we will take to enhance their education, training, and life opportunities. We are committed to working together with young people to achieve meaningful change. However, this responsibility does not lie solely with the council. Corporate parenting is</p>	

everyone's responsibility. Schools, health practitioners, employers, and our local businesses and community all play a part in helping care-experienced young people thrive. This strategy reflects our shared commitment to working as one team, with care-experienced young people at the centre of everything we do.

The report is coming to the Cabinet because the Cabinet's terms of reference include 'To have responsibility for the Council's role as corporate parent', and that Cabinet ought to be agreeing significant strategies as per matters reserved to Cabinet 'To approve plans and strategies in relation to the provision of services'. [The previous Corporate Parenting Strategy was agreed by Cabinet on 24 Feb 2021 and the report can be viewed on this link.](#)

Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information

No document that requires listing were used in the preparation of this report.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to recommend the proposed Corporate Parenting Strategy at Appendix 1 to Council for adoption.

The Council is recommended to adopt the proposed Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025-2028 as set out at Appendix 1.

Signed:



Date: 24th March 2025

1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Over the past three years, Camden has worked towards the ambitions set out in its Corporate Parenting Strategy (2021–2024), strengthening the support available to care-experienced children and young people. The increased national and local focus on improving outcomes for this cohort has aligned with Camden’s commitment to continually raising our ambition as corporate parents. This has provided a timely opportunity to review and build on our progress, setting a renewed vision for the next three years.
- 1.2. The Corporate Parenting Strategy (2025–2028) sets out how Camden will meet the needs of children in care and care-experienced young people (care leavers), ensuring they receive the same stability, opportunities, and aspirations that any loving parent would provide. This strategy outlines our key priorities, focusing on areas where improvements can be made while building on Camden’s existing strengths. It aligns with the borough’s Youth Missions and Child Health Equity work, reinforcing a whole-system approach that places children and young people at the centre. The strategy also commits to improving education, training, housing, and employment opportunities, ensuring care-experienced young people have the same life chances as their peers.
- 1.3. This renewed strategy comes at a time of national change, with increasing recognition of the need to strengthen support for care-experienced young people. Camden is committed to being a leader in this space, ensuring young people receive the stability, encouragement, and opportunities they need to thrive. At the same time, there is a continued focus on family stability and early intervention. Wherever possible, efforts will be made to keep families together safely. Where entering care is necessary, Camden will ensure that children are placed in stable, loving family settings or, where this is not possible, in high-quality, trauma-informed residential settings that provide the security and support they need.
- 1.4. In January 2024, Camden took a bold step in recognising care experience as a locally protected characteristic, ensuring that care-experienced children, young people, and adults are protected from stigma, disadvantage, and discrimination. The motion was unanimously agreed by members, reflecting Camden’s determination to embed this commitment across all council services and with partners. This decision reinforces the shared responsibility of corporate parenting, extending beyond the Council to include schools, health professionals, employers, and the wider community. The ambition is clear: to ensure that care-experienced young people are supported in every aspect of their lives, not just within children’s social care.
- 1.5. Camden has a strong track record in delivering high-quality services for care-experienced young people. In its last Ofsted inspection, Camden was rated ‘outstanding’, with inspectors recognising that the care leavers service is “rooted in relational practice, where personal advisers build warm, professional relationships and take pride in young people’s achievements.”

Camden's well-established local offer includes mental health support, a higher education grant, paid travel and Wi-Fi costs, supported accommodation, and subsidised gym membership.

- 1.6. However, Camden remains determined to go further. The Corporate Parenting Strategy (2025–2028) sets a renewed vision for Camden's role as a corporate parent, ensuring that every child currently in our care and young person leaving care has the support they need to thrive. This requires a continued focus on collaboration, ambition, and accountability, ensuring that the whole council and its partners work together to create the best possible futures for Camden's care-experienced young people.

2. PROPOSAL AND REASONS

- 2.1. The statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services states that the Council is responsible for acting as effective and caring corporate parent for all Children Looked After and Care-Experienced Young People. Simply put, the term 'corporate parent' refers to the collective responsibility of all elected members, staff, and partner agencies to provide the best possible support and safeguarding for this cohort and to support their transition into adulthood. This involves an absolute commitment that our children should achieve in education, live in stable homes where they receive love and care and be ready for independence as they mature into adulthood.
- 2.2. According to its Terms of reference, the Cabinet has responsibility for the Council's role as corporate parent and should also agree the Council's significant strategies in relation to the provision of services. It is recommended that Cabinet approves our strategy to improve our offer and outcomes for Camden's children and young people with experience of care, building on our recent efforts to make Corporate Parenting 'everybody's business' across the council, our partners and Camden's communities.
- 2.3. This Corporate Parenting Strategy has been developed through extensive engagement with care-experienced young people, frontline practitioners, senior officers and key partners across Camden. Our approach has been rooted in co-production, ensuring that the voices of children and young people with lived experience have shaped our priorities, commitments, and actions.
- 2.4. This refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025- 2028 is underpinned by five co-designed promises, to safeguard our children and young people and help them become the best possible adults.

2.4.1. **Belonging and relationships:** "We promise to celebrate you for who you are and help you feel like you belong to your local community. We will support you in developing long-lasting, supportive relationships with people who are important to you."

2.4.2. **Rights and aspirations:** “We promise to ensure that all the people who support you are care-conscious and act as your corporate parent. We will advocate for your rights and aspirations and protect you from facing disadvantage from wider services and the community.”

2.4.3. **Wellbeing:** “We promise to support you in adopting a happy and healthy lifestyle and to help you navigate how you feel and life’s ups and downs, ensuring your health and emotional wellbeing needs are met.”

2.4.4. **Interests and life goals:** “We promise to champion you and help you find and succeed in the right education, training, and employment aligned with your life goals and interests.”

2.4.5. **Home:** “We promise that you will have a place to stay which feels safe and secure. We will do our best to find a stable accommodation that meets your needs, connects you to a community, and eventually helps you find a place you can call home.”

2.5. The strategy emphasises that Corporate Parenting is everybody’s responsibility. It outlines our vision to be a care-conscious council, where not only frontline practitioners in social work support our children and young people with experience of care, but instead all our services including housing, inclusive economy, and adult social care see themselves as Corporate Parents. It also recognises the importance of joint working and shared corporate parenting responsibility with health services, schools, and even local businesses and the wider community.

2.6. This strategy also builds on recent policy changes at the national level to raise our ambition and our offer for young people leaving care. Whereas our previous strategy had a major focus on our children currently in care (before they turn 18), this new strategy takes an all-age approach, recognising the importance of supporting our care-experienced young people in their transition to adulthood, as opposed to the ‘cliff edge’ that some care leavers can experience when they turn 18 and which can be associated with much poorer life outcomes.

2.7. We are committed to taking an intersectional approach to understand experiences of care. The proposed strategy identifies four priority cohorts within our care-experienced children and young people, acknowledging that our children and young people with experience of care have varied experiences and that some groups might have specific needs that require particular attention. These are the four priority cohorts identified as part of our new strategy, with a bespoke plan of action to enhance the support they receive:

- **Unaccompanied and separated children and young people:** we have a significant portion of our children in care and care leavers who are Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC). They often have to manage the effects of trauma,

adjusting to a new culture and complex immigration processes – and the strategy outlines how we can enhance our support to this cohort.

- **Children and young people with support needs:** some of our children with specific needs (who might need ongoing support into adulthood from adult social care) could experience a smoother transition from children to adult services and the strategy outlines a plan to do this.
- **Children and young people with experience of the justice system and at risk of exploitation in the community:** this cohort needs specific support to break the cycle of harm they have experienced and build a better future. The strategy sets out a plan to work in partnership with other agencies and services (Youth Justice, Probation, Prisons, etc) to ensure their specific needs are met.
- **Young Parents:** care-experienced young people who have children in their care might need extra support as they navigate their parenthood journey, and the strategy draws our plan to enhance the support currently available.

2.8. It is essential for the Council to have a Corporate Parenting strategy. Care-experienced children and young people nationally experience worse outcomes than their counterparts with no experience in care across employment, education, housing and health and wellbeing. Whilst Camden has a very good offer for its residents who grow up in Camden's care, it is important not to be complacent and to keep raising our collective ambition for them as their Corporate Parents.

3. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Option 1: Do nothing (not recommended)

3.1. The Council is deeply committed to ensuring that Camden's children in care and care-experienced young people are supported, valued, and given every opportunity to thrive, and we aim to reduce the multiple systemic stigmas, disadvantages, and discrimination they have faced. To do this, we need to have an up-to-date Corporate Parenting Strategy which reflects the views and lived experience of our care-experienced young people. The Council's most recent Corporate Parenting Strategy expired in 2024 and needs to be replaced.

Option 2 (recommended): Agree the proposed Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025-28 (at Appendix 1)

3.2. The proposed Corporate Parenting Strategy at Appendix 1 sets out how we will work with schools, health practitioners, employers, local businesses, local

communities and young people themselves, to help care-experienced young people thrive. The strategy reflects our shared commitment to working as one team, with care-experienced young people at the centre of everything we do. Care-experienced young people's experiences, hopes, and ideas have been instrumental in shaping this new strategy and it helps to ensure that their voices will always be at the heart of our work.

4. WHAT ARE THE KEY IMPACTS / RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?

- 4.1. **There is not enough funding available to meet the strategy's ambition** No additional funding has been agreed to support the creation of a dedicated Hub for Care Experienced young people as well as two participation roles for care experienced young people. The rest of the strategy has been developed to be deliverable within the resources already available.
- 4.2. **Partners do not support the strategy's aims and delivery** Partners have been engaged throughout the development of the strategy and their views have been built into the proposed strategy. It reflects a shared commitment across the whole borough to put young people at the centre of everything we do.
- 4.3. **Changes in national policy may affect the future delivery of the strategy** The proposed strategy has considered the potential impact of the proposed national reforms to social care and the Children's Wellbeing and School Bill and been developed to make the most of the opportunities these present.

5. CONSULTATION/ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1. Developing Camden's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025–2028 has been a collaborative effort, shaped by the voices and experiences of care-experienced children and young people, as well as a broad range of stakeholders. We have taken a whole-system approach, ensuring that every part of the Council and our partners play a role in improving outcomes for children in care and care-experienced young people.
- 5.2. We engaged directly with care-experienced children and young people in several ways:
 - Workshops and Surveys – A thorough survey was sent to all care-experienced children and young people, and we received detailed responses from 18% of the cohort. Care experienced young people were involved in shaping the phrasing of the questions to ensure they reflected real experiences.

- Co-Designing the Care Experience Hub – Over four months, a dedicated group of young people worked with us as co-designers to develop plans for Camden’s Care Experience Hub, ensuring that it meets the needs of those it will serve.
 - Participatory Research on Accommodation – Care-experienced young people worked with researchers to scope questions and analyse findings in a deep-dive study on accommodation, leading to rich insights into housing stability, quality, and lived experience.
- 5.3. Recognising that corporate parenting is a whole-Council responsibility, we set up a cross-Council working group involving senior officers from Corporate Services, Adult Social Care, Public Health, Children’s Services, Housing and Inclusive Economy. This group helped ensure that our ambitions for corporate parenting are embedded across Council services.
- 5.4. In addition, we held focused conversations with key stakeholders. This included going to key meetings bringing senior officers together, respectively from Corporate Services on our ‘Your rights and aspirations’ promise, and from Adults and Health meeting spaces on ‘Your wellbeing’ promise.
- 5.5. We engaged frontline professionals who work directly with care-experienced children and young people, including social workers supporting children in care; Personal Advisers who support care-experienced young people transitioning to independence and Camden’s Virtual School, which provides education, training, and employment support for this cohort. Their feedback has been crucial in shaping the practical elements of the strategy, ensuring that it is both ambitious and deliverable.
- 5.6. Throughout the development of this strategy, we also engaged elected members. Back in January 2024, we had a Full Council debate focusing on making care experience a protected characteristic. This was a powerful and deeply moving discussion that highlighted the keen interest and commitment of elected members in improving the lives of Camden’s care-experienced young people. National campaigners Terry Galloway and Lemn Sissay OBE delivered compelling speeches on the barriers faced by care-experienced people, from homelessness and mental health struggles to systemic discrimination, reinforcing the urgency of treating care experience as a protected characteristic. Cathy Ashley of the Family Rights Group celebrated Camden’s leadership in funding Lifelong Links up to age 25, while Barnardo’s research, presented by Rod Weston-Bartholomew, highlighted the double discrimination faced by Black children in care. Personal Advisers Angela and Anthony, who directly support Camden’s care experienced young people, brought to life the daily challenges they face, including difficulties with housing, mental health, and financial support after turning 18. Prior to the full-council debate, members had the opportunity to hear directly from Camden’s care experienced young people themselves in a closed chamber, who delivered compelling accounts of the support they had received and the reasons why care experience should be made a protected characteristic.

Councillors engaged actively in the debate, with Cllr Francis exploring employment opportunities, Cllr Jirira advocating for better mental health support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and Cllr Greenwood questioning how support could extend beyond age 25. Cllr Gale urged colleagues to recognise their Corporate Parenting responsibilities, and Cllrs Boyland and Cllr Shah closed the debate by thanking speakers and reaffirming Camden's commitment to tackling inequality and discrimination. The debate culminated in a historic moment, with councillors from all parties unanimously voting to treat care experience as a locally protected characteristic, solidifying Camden's national leadership on this issue.

- 5.7. We kept engaging elected members throughout the development of the strategy. We went to the Corporate Parenting Board every quarter this past year, keeping them abreast of strategy development and incorporating their insights at each iteration. The board is co-chaired by two elected members, including the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Life and Families, and other elected members have joined the board meetings more recently. We also engaged the Children's Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee on the strategy development as part of the Corporate Parenting Annual Report.
- 5.8. We wanted to engage with our partners and the wider community on this strategy to ensure collective ownership and buy-in. As such, we presented to the Children's Safeguarding Partnership meeting, where care-experienced young people are one of their priority cohorts for the next two years. We have also been to various additional forums, such as the School Governors' Forum, to engage education leaders on our Corporate Parenting Strategy; and the Annual Camden Providers Events, where we engaged health providers, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities providers and leisure providers on corporate parenting.
- 5.9. Finally, Camden businesses and voluntary organisations were engaged on the strategy through the Youth Mission, where care-experienced young people are also a priority cohort. This engagement was vital to ensure we raise our ambition on care-experienced children and young people's education, employment and training outcomes in our resource-rich borough.
- 5.10. We have also undertaken an equality impact assessment, which can be found in Appendix 2 of this report. Having assessed the potential impacts of the Strategy on all care experienced children and young people (including those with intersecting identities which include one or more characteristics that are protected under the Equality Act 2010), only positive impacts were found, and no negative impacts were found for all characteristics. The Equality Impact Assessment thus supports the implementation of the strategy with no modifications required.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The Council has a duty to have regard to the corporate parenting principles in Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 in exercising its functions and a duty to have regard to the accompanying statutory guidance. The

principles apply to looked after children as well as children and young people who have left care. The corporate parenting principles include consideration of helping care experienced young people gain access to local authority services and those of its relevant partners.

- 6.2. Relevant partners are defined in Section 10(4) of the Children Act 2004, and they will have a duty to co-operate with the Council.
- 6.3. The Council must publish a 'Local Offer' setting out the services it provides to care experienced young people.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. This report seeks Cabinet approval for the proposed Corporate Parenting Strategy (Appendix 1) for the years 2025-2028.
- 7.2. The strategy includes the proposal to co-design a dedicated hub for care-experienced young people. The feasibility study cost plan includes early estimates of c.£0.947m for the capital development of the hub. The final cost of the development and ongoing running costs of the hub will be established through a comprehensive business plan and will be recommended as part of future capital and revenue budgets in line with the Council's governance arrangements.
- 7.3. The rest of the strategy detailed in the report will be delivered within existing resources.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The creation of a Hub for care-experienced young people may have environmental implications. It is planned that the Hub is set in a Camden-owned building in Pancras Square. The building is Grade II listed and will require some refurbishment. We are currently going through the planning application to see what refurbishment is possible.
- 8.2. We will ensure that any refurbishment undertaken is in line with our objectives to minimise the negative impact on the environment and decrease the building's carbon footprint, looking at elements such as insulation and heating system.

9. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 9.1. Work is already underway to begin implementing some of the strategy's ambitions, as we have been taking a programme approach to developing the strategy. We have been working on an implementation plan in parallel of the strategy to ensure clear lines of accountability, responsibility for progressing actions and clear timeframes, alongside measures of success, which can be found in Appendix 3.

- 9.2. We envisage that some of the ambitions that form part of the strategy will be easily implementable and represent 'quick wins' that can be implemented within 6 months to a year, should the strategy be approved by Cabinet. Other ambitions are more long term and require a system change; we will aim to see evidence of impact within 2-3 years.
- 9.3. Should the strategy be approved by Cabinet, there will be a clear plan of governance to put the vision into practice for the different strategy priorities. We will take a mixed approach with adding strategy-related items onto the agenda of existing relevant meetings, forums and boards, and creating new workstream meetings where the right space does not currently exist to bring the right stakeholders together.
- 9.4. The implementation of the strategy will be closely monitored by the Corporate Parenting Board, as well as by the already established Cross-Council Working Group chaired by the DCS, which will meet quarterly.

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Corporate Parenting Strategy
Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 3 – Implementation Plan

REPORT ENDS