



# Children's Sufficiency Strategy

*Children Looked After and Care Leavers*

2024-2027



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## Foreword – Waltham Forest’s Pledge

I am delighted to introduce our Children’s Sufficiency Strategy for children and young people in Waltham Forest. It has been produced with our local partnership to improve the range of accommodation and support in Waltham Forest for children in care and care leavers.

Since the development of our last sufficiency strategy, the local and national landscape for children looked after and care leavers has significantly changed. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound impact, both on child development and the planned implementation of improvements to local services.

Young people with accommodation needs are some of the most vulnerable in our community, but I am committed to working together with our young people so that their voices are heard, their priorities are recognised, and outcomes are improved. Our focus will be for children and young people to live in family environments and to develop the necessary skills for independence in adulthood.

Waltham Forest’s Corporate Parenting Board will hold this strategy to account and ensure we deliver on our commitment to improve outcomes for our young people. This is a joint endeavour, and we will work across the partnership, in collaboration with parents and families, to focus on the areas identified within our action plan which will make the greatest change.

I hope you find this strategy informative and aspirational for our young people.



Cllr. Kizzy Gardiner

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

## 1. Introduction

Waltham Forest's 2024-2027 Children's Sufficiency Strategy sets out the vision and priorities for supporting children and young people with accommodation needs in the borough.

The Sufficiency Duty (Section 22G of the Children Act 1989) requires Local Authorities, as far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure there is sufficient accommodation within their Local Authority area to meet the needs of those children for whom they have Corporate Parenting responsibility.

Mission Waltham Forest represents the council's commitment to ensure that every family and every child can access the services and support they need to thrive, reducing the requirement for children and young people to leave their family environments and placing them in alternative care.

This strategy sets out the actions that will improve the experiences and outcomes for children and young people. The document sits alongside the council's People at the Heart of Our Place Strategy; the SEND Preparing for Adulthood Strategy; the SEND Strategy; the Babies, Children and Young People Strategy; and the All-Age Autism Strategy. These plans collectively ensure residents with unique needs are supported.

The strategy aims to deliver transformational change for Children Looked After and Care Leavers, placing a strong focus on prevention and early intervention, so that we can support families before they reach crisis points. Where provision is required, collaborative arrangements with other local authorities and providers of children's accommodation will be considered to continually seek good financial value for the services that are commissioned.

The associated three-year action plan to this strategy will enhance the availability and quality of alternative homes for children and young people who may require them although the primary focus will always be on family preservation.

### About the borough – the local context

Waltham Forest is an outer east London borough that has a mixture of both inner and outer London characteristics. The north of the borough is less densely populated with larger homes and an older population, while in the south, the population is younger and more transient with residents more likely to live in private rented accommodation and in overcrowded conditions.

Appendix Two contains a detailed population profile for the borough. Key headlines regarding our children looked after cohort are outlined overleaf:

**Children looked after in 2023-24 by their legal status.**

Number and percentage of children who started to be looked after in 2023/24 by legal status	2023/24 starters (count)	2023/24 starters (%)
Interim Care Order – when a child first comes into care to allow time before a court can make a final decision regarding ongoing care arrangements.	24	14%
Accommodated under Section 20 – a voluntary care arrangement between the person or people responsible for the child and the council.	105	60%
Under Police Protection and in local authority accommodation	37	21%
Full care order	10	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Length of time children under the age of 16 spend in care.**

Length of time in care (as of May 2024) for children under 16 years old	Number of Children Looked After	% of Children Looked After
3 months or less	28	13%
More than 3 months but less than or equal to 6 months	15	7%
More than 6 months but less than 1 year	31	15%
1 year but less than 2 years	48	22%
2 years and over	91	43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Care leavers cohorts by age.**

Care Leaver Cohort	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Age	62	51	60	173
In contact with local authority	98%	100%	100%	99%
Education, Employment and Training	60%	59%	53%	57%
In suitable accommodation	93%	98%	95%	95%

Data below is as of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024.



61,300 children and young people under the age of 18 years are estimated to live in the borough.



There are 28 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in care (9% of the total of 309 Children in care)



LBWF have a total of 309 children in care



LBWF have 17 children placed in Children’s Residential Care Homes.

- 6 live with known disability.
- 3 are placed within Waltham Forest.
- 4 are placed over a 20-mile radius
- 4 are placed within a 10-mile radius.



SEND Service support 3433 children and young people with an EHCP

- 35 are children looked after.
- 13 have a child protection plan.
- 51 have a child in need plan.
- 17 are care leavers.
- 53 young people are supported by Adult Social Care.



The following cohorts are in suitable accommodation:

- 92.6% of 19-21 year old care leavers
- 94.6% 19-21 year old care leavers
- 90.3% 22-25 year old care leavers



These cohorts are in education, employment or training:

- 76.5% of 17-18 year old care leavers
- 62.5% 19-21 year old care leavers
- 51.5% 22-25 year old care leavers



More than 2/3 of the Looked After Children cohort are from Black and Minority Ethnic groups (72%)



94.3% of looked after children had their care plans reviewed in the past 6 months



Nearly 74% of Waltham Forest Children in Care are residing in a foster home.



There are 411 care leavers known to Corporate Parenting



Over the last 12 months to March 2024, 6 adoptions have been finalised and 17 children now have Placement Orders

## 2. Our Strategy

### Our Vision

We will promote family preservation with ‘family first’ principles at the heart of our practice and ensure that all children and young people will have the support they need to access safe, high-quality accommodation and develop the necessary skills for independence as they grow into adulthood.

#### What is the purpose of this strategy?

This strategy sets out our vision, principles, and priorities for supporting children in care and care leavers with accommodation needs. LBWF’s ambition is to provide safe, loving homes for children and young people in high-quality and affordable environments.

The strategy responds to what young people consider to be most important to make them feel supported so that they can realise their full potential as they grow into independent and confident young adults.

#### Who is the strategy for?

- Children and young people (0-25) who are in care or care leavers.
- Parents, carers, and families.
- Professionals working in education, health, and social care.
- Local partners, such as third sector organisations (charities and voluntary organisations).
- Accommodation providers for children and young people as well as families who could provide loving, family environments in the borough.

#### How was the strategy developed?

This strategy, its priorities and action plan has been co-produced ensuring the voices of care experienced children and young people in Waltham Forest are at the heart of this document. The views and feedback from young people have been supported by an extensive data analysis, including benchmarking against our statistical neighbours, and reviewing regional and national averages against key data indicators.

### 3. Our Priorities



#### Our Priorities

1

Ensuring children and young people are thriving in their homes or in alternative care settings.

2

Ensuring all children and young people have access to safe, stable, and supportive accommodation.

3

Supporting young people by building their independence.



### 3.1. Priority 1: Ensuring children and young people are thriving at home and in alternative care settings.

#### What our children and young people had to say

From October – December 2023, LBWF's Voice and Participation Team carried out a consultation for Children Looked After and Care Leavers, to inform the new Children's Sufficiency Strategy for Waltham Forest. The consultation gathered feedback through online surveys, interviews, and public meetings with children, young people, professionals, and service providers.

Consultation feedback offered valuable insight into how children services could be improved, offering fresh ideas and ways to work together. The consultation focused on key concerns, including housing choices, support services, safety, independent living skills and training available for children and young people. The primary aim was to hear directly from children and young people with lived experience to improve services and shape the Action Plan within the Sufficiency Strategy.

Through insight gained from the consultation we ran, young people shared what makes them feel supported in their homes. They told us they feel most supported when:

- They are cared for in their homes as part of a family, including being looked after when they are unwell.
- They are listened to, respected, reassured, and given advice when they are worried.
- They are encouraged to be independent and develop the skills needed for adulthood.



## Our ambition

Waltham Forest is committed to creating a nurturing environment at home and in alternative care homes within the borough, so that children and young people can thrive. Our priority is to support families to stay together, minimising the need for children to enter care. Where appropriate and safe, we will work to reunite children with their families, ensuring they grow up in environments that promote stability and growth. Our ambition aligns with our Corporate Mission Statement 1 (image below) by ensuring that every child and family is supported with the right services to create stable, nurturing environments, enabling all children to thrive, whether at home or in alternative homes.



### Mission Waltham Forest Mission 1

#### Ensure every family and every child are given every opportunity

We will ensure every family and every child can access the services and support they need so all children can thrive.

## How we will deliver this priority

- **We are increasing our pool of local foster carers, providing a safe, stable and loving home.**
  - ❖ Waltham Forest is leading a cluster of 5 local authorities from Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham, Tower Hamlets, and Newham to create a front-door recruitment and retention hub, boosting approval of foster carers in areas of specific shortage and addressing retention through better support to existing foster carers. The programme is funded by the Department for Education.
  - ❖ Creation of three extra Mockingbird Constellations, in addition to the existing three Hubs already in place, taking the total number of LBWF constellations to six. This model will promote expert peer support, joint planning, training and social interaction amongst foster carers.
  - ❖ Joining the London Borough of Newham's Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) to increase the available pool of independent foster carers for LBWF children.

- **We are improving our adoption and permanence service** by enhancing training and supporting the Permanence Team in undertaking timely assessments of connected kinship care and Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) providing children and young people with more stability and security in their living arrangements.
  - ❖ They will provide support for assessments undertaken for kinship family and friends' carers and Special Guardians.
  - ❖ Kinship Hub training will include specialised training on trauma-informed practice, improving understanding of the impact of trauma on children.
  - ❖ We are working with the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) to improve services to increase the number of children adopted.

This is a priority area that will enable more children who cannot live with their parents to stay with people who are known to them and love them.

- **We are promoting Early Permanence by working with adoption specialists Coram.** This will allow babies and young children in care to find foster carers who are ready and willing to adopt them later, if the courts decide they cannot be cared for permanently by their family. This initiative promotes stability in the lives of children who have already suffered disruption and trauma.

## Impact

By increasing the number of high-quality independent foster care homes close to the borough, children and young people will have the opportunity to stay connected to their local community, friends, and school, contributing to their sense of stability. This also ensures children and young people remain in nurturing environments tailored to their needs, giving them the chance to build trusting relationships with foster carers.

By strengthening the adoption and permanence service, including kinship care and Special Guardianship Orders, children will experience more stable, long-term stability by living with family members or close caregivers.

Providing training on trauma-informed practices to kinship carers ensures that those caring for children better understand the effects of trauma and can provide the appropriate support. This will create more nurturing environments, helping children heal and thrive both emotionally and physically.



## 3.2 Priority 2: Ensuring all children and young people have access to safe, stable, and supportive accommodation.

### What our children and young people had to say

Through insight gained from the consultation we ran, young people shared that they want to feel:

- Fully supported when moving into new accommodation, with guidance from key workers to ease the transition.
- Safe, with appropriate security measures and approachable staff.
- Comfort and stability during transition periods.

### Our ambition

Waltham Forest is committed to providing every child and young person with a safe, stable, and nurturing environment. We will address the accommodation needs of all children in care and care leavers. Our vision is that all children and young people, whether at home or in alternative homes, will have the support and security they need to grow, develop, and achieve their full potential. Our ambition aligns with our Corporate Mission Statement 4 (image below) and contributes to the broader goal of addressing the housing crisis by providing homes, security and support for children looked after and care leavers.



#### Mission Waltham Forest Mission 4

#### Tackle the housing crisis head on

We will deliver a new generation of homes that are affordable to buy and affordable to live in.

## How we will deliver this priority

- **Establishing a front-door Recruitment and Retention Hub** that will enable high quality foster care.
  - ❖ This will guide prospective foster carers through their entire fostering journey adding in a layer of support, which they have requested.
  - ❖ This will ensure a single point of contact for prospective foster carers, offering ongoing emotional and practical support.
  
- **Increasing payments made to Foster Carers providing homes to children with complex needs.**
  - ❖ This will ensure foster carers are supported to continue to be able to provide homes to children with complex health and / or emotional health even as these needs may increase. This will promote continuity in the family setting for the child and young person.
  - ❖ Some children and young people with complex needs in residential children's homes may also be able to move to foster carers because of the greater support provided.
  
- **Extending and expanding the current 16+ Semi Independent Accommodation Framework** to 2026 to ensure the continued availability of sufficient, local as well as regional accommodation for LBWF's Care Leavers and young people.
  - ❖ This will increase the number of stand-alone accommodations for care leavers transitioning out of care and wishing to live independently.
  - ❖ Young people will have greater access to safe, independent living spaces. This not only provides them with the stability they need but also provides them with the time needed to develop essential life skills, fostering confidence and self-sufficiency as they enter adulthood.
  
- **Introducing the Supported Lodging Scheme** (for care leavers requiring additional support before moving towards semi-independent living and finally into independent living).
  - ❖ This will provide additional choices of accommodation services for young people as they transition into independent living.

- **Extending operating hours of Lester House, the in-house Children’s Residential, Respite and Contact Centre Services**
  - ❖ This will increase respite provision for parents and carers to seven days a week ensuring essential breaks for families.
  
- **Reviewing effectiveness and value for money of existing children’s residential provider contracts and instead collaborate with neighbouring boroughs or specialist children’s providers to develop specialist home provisions, close to the borough.**
  - ❖ This will provide additional alternative home capacity with a focus on provisions for children with complex physical and emotional health needs.
  
- **Working with national Children’s service providers to re-develop existing council property into semi-independent accommodation for young care leavers who are ready to live independently. Initial proposals have considered:**
  - ❖ Supported accommodation, ensuring care leavers have access to stable, secure housing as they transition into adulthood, with the necessary support to promote independence. Young people will have a safe space to grow, build essential life skills, and focus on their education, employment, and personal development.
  - ❖ Proposals will also consider specialist accommodation. This accommodation is for young people who may have a disability or need support with mental health problems. For instance, the accommodation might be a self-contained flat with 24/7 support available.
  - ❖ Gap Homes – these provide young people who would value more independence, but not yet confident in living alone, their own tenancy at 16 or 17. This provides the option of sharing accommodation with other young people or living alone but with extended practical and emotional support from a care provider to ease the transition to living alone. The council has an existing provision developed in conjunction with Centre Point but are exploring new models utilising existing council properties, to develop further capacity in the borough.
  
- **Development of an emergency accommodation suite** as an alternative for young people under a Police Protection Order (PPO). who may need

to stay in a police station whilst ongoing care arrangements are being put in place. If a child is believed to be at risk of significant harm, they can be removed from their home and placed under police protection for up to 72 hours in a safe location, under the Children Act 1989. This is an emergency and temporary measure, and no court order is required.

This often, and unsuitably, means a young person remains in a police station whilst care arrangements are being put in place. The development of a dedicated ‘place of safety’ in the borough will offer children and young people a safe, temporary space rather than remaining in police care under Police Protection Orders whilst their ongoing care arrangements are arranged. This will support children in staying out of the care system and reduces disruptions to their lives, allowing families to stay together where possible.

- ❖ A detailed options appraisal including detail on suitable sites will be produced in late 2024 but will include use of the Family Contact Centre at Lester House for emergency use, out of hours, to provide an essential place safety for children and young people. The proposal will not seek to reduce the current provision at the Family Contact Centre but suggest an additional use of the facility.
- **Development of a ‘Crash Pad’ provision** as an alternative to children and young people formally coming into care. A child or young person sometimes experiences trauma which requires a short-term intervention (for less than 24 hours) where they are required to leave their existing family environment but ultimately not requiring a permanent change in their ongoing care arrangements.
  - ❖ A proposal will be developed by early 2025 to consider an alternative use for one of the respite rooms at Lester House to provide a place of safety, with the necessary care and support arrangements for a child or young person whilst the cause of the initial intervention is being investigated. This will be with a view that the child or young person can then return to their existing family environment.

### Impact

Every child and young person in Waltham Forest will have safe, stable, and supportive accommodation that will enable them to thrive and achieve positive outcomes as they transition into adulthood. This is extremely important for our care leavers who have in many cases, experienced instability, transience and uncertainty in their lives.





### 3.3 Priority 3: Supporting young people by building their independence.

#### What our children and young people had to say

Through insight gained from the consultation we ran; young people expressed the need for support in developing key life skills. They highlighted the importance of gaining confidence in managing their own finances, budgeting, and cooking.

#### Our ambition

Waltham Forest will develop services to improve young people’s sense of independence to ensure that they thrive in adulthood. We want our young people to leave care and move towards independence at a time and pace that is right for them. Positive and loving relationships and social networks established whilst young people are in care will be nurtured and helped so that these endure into adulthood. Our ambition aligns with our Corporate Mission Statement 3 (image below) by empowering young people leaving care and ensuring that they have the support needed to live healthier, more independent lives, which contributes to making Waltham Forest a great place to thrive at any stage of life.



#### Mission Waltham Forest Mission 3

#### Make Waltham Forest a great place to live and age well

We will ensure all residents can make the most of their strengths and live healthier, longer, and more independent lives.

## How we will deliver this priority

- **Developing a Leaving care hub** to prepare young people for independent living by offering a place they can use as a drop in to meet and socialise.

- ❖ Redevelopment of the George Mitchell Secondary School Craft Design and Technology (CDT) in Farmer Road, Leyton, to accommodate a new purpose-built Leaving Care Hub to prepare care leavers for independent living. This will also contain three to six self-contained residential units.

The Leaving Care Hub will provide an integrated personalised service to young care leavers aged 18-25 years old to prepare them for independent living but also to offer a place they can use as a drop in to meet and socialise with friends and their leaving care coaches.

Additionally, the existing Leaving Care service places a focus on:

- ❖ Life Skills development: Moving on and taking care workshops are offered at the HUB for all young people approaching adulthood. These are offered by the Housing department, Department of Work and Pensions and The Rents team respectively. There are also 'Taking care' workshops for young people focussing on health issues related to their mental and sexual health.
  - ❖ Provide support to young people through the transition of leaving care.
  - ❖ Provide companionship and emotional support to the young person.
  - ❖ Identifying, assessing, and responding to changes in the young person's physical, emotional, and mental needs.
  - ❖ Contribute to the young person's care planning, evaluation, and achievement of goals.
  - ❖ Practical support with the creation of official documentation such as passports, national insurance numbers, bank accounts and access to financial support.
- We are improving our education support **working with Virtual Schools and the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) service** to support young people with disabilities into education.
    - ❖ We are currently recruiting care leavers with disabilities to start

- apprenticeship roles within the Council.
- ❖ Waltham Forest will promote care leavers to aspire and attain, by pursuing higher education opportunities – particularly targeting universities with higher tariff admission requirements.
- We are improving outcomes in employment for young people by **working in partnership with local businesses and Voluntary Sector organisations**. Some ongoing examples include:
- ❖ Countryside partnerships are a construction firm who are offering apprenticeships, work experience and training located next to the Town Hall. There is a total of 13 young people who have been put forward to access opportunities in 2024.
  - ❖ During the general election 24 young people in various roles were able to gain paid employment during the election period.
  - ❖ Centrepoint and Morgan Sindall are offering employment skills advice on an ongoing basis to our young people.

## Impact

Planning for leaving care will start sufficiently early to meet young people's needs and build on existing care and personal education plans. The wishes and feelings of care leavers will be at the core of this. The planning process will also consider any needs related to the young person's specific circumstances – including whether they are an unaccompanied asylum seeker, a young parent or have had contact with the criminal justice system.

Through these changes, our young people will be able to make the most of their strengths and will be equipped with the necessary skills to prepare them for a successful adulthood, living healthier, safer and independent lives. Our focus on using education, employment and training as a vehicle to support young people being independent will develop resilience to the challenges of becoming an adult.

There are multiple challenges in becoming an adult. The Corporate Parenting Service is committed to always being accessible to our care leavers for information, advice and support even after leaving care as our young people embark on their respective journeys of independence. Our young people will always be considered as family.

## 4 Our Governance

Waltham Forest’s Corporate Parenting Board’s role is to ensure the council and its partners commit to excellent standards of corporate parenting and deliver the right services to children looked after and care experienced people, so that they are kept safe and have every opportunity to flourish.

The Board includes and is co-chaired by local young people with care experience. It will hold to account the delivery of the Waltham Forest Sufficiency Action Plan with progress monitored quarterly. Additionally, this will ensure the strategy document:

- Reflects any changes made to practice or policy.
- Provides key updates about improvements made to the care support system, or new developments arising due to this plan.
- Develops additional opportunities to hear feedback from LBWF’s children in care, care experienced young people and practitioners from across the system to refine the plan further.
- Ensure significant progress will also feature in the Corporate Parenting Board’s annual report.

Feedback from children, families, and stakeholders will inform ongoing improvements and adjustments to ensure that the strategy remains responsive to evolving needs.



## 5 Conclusion

Waltham Forest will ensure that there are sufficient, good quality accommodation options for children and young people, either in care or as care leavers. This will be done in conjunction with young people, ensuring their voices are heard. This will be achieved by scrutinising the effectiveness and financial value of our commissioned services, ensuring the needs of our children and young people are being met.

A variety of accommodation options will be developed, in partnership with other organisations, in an innovative approach to meet the needs of local children and young people. There will be a focus on preventing children coming into care or reunifying young people in care with their families where appropriate, as quickly as possible.

It is essential that everyone in the Council and other partners work collaboratively, playing their part in supporting the best possible outcomes for children looked after and care leavers by:

- Ensuring young people are at the forefront of fundamental decisions made about their own lives which may relate to where they live or educational establishments they may attend. This should also include involvement in policy setting with leadership roles in governance forums such as the Waltham Forest Corporate Parenting Board.
- Conducting continuous reviews of the support and services offered to Children in Care and Care Leavers, championing their rights and facilitating their successful transition into adulthood.
- Improving data sharing between departments within the Council and with partners to assist in the seamless and uninterrupted provision of care for children and young people. This is particularly important when young people transition between Children's and Adult Services.
- Prioritising Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for staff working with children, ensuring they have the skills and knowledge necessary to provide high-quality support and care.

By collectively taking these actions, LBWF and its partners will create a supportive environment where children and young people receive the care and support they need to thrive and reach their full potential.

## 6 Appendices

### Appendix One – Children’s Sufficiency Strategy: LBWF Action Plan

Priority 1: Ensuring children and young people are thriving at home and in alternative homes.						
	Service	Outcome / Impact	Action	Lead	Status	Timescale
1	Adoption & Permanence	<p>This will enable more children who cannot live with their parents to stay with people who are known to them and love them.</p> <p>Increased rates of adoption and permanence through improved training and support for the Permanence Team.</p> <p>This will result in timely assessments of connected kinship care and Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs).</p>	<p>The Permanence team to continue to use the Kinship Hub for training and support for assessments undertaken for kinship family and friends’ carers and Special Guardians.</p>	LBWF Fostering and Adoption Service.	In progress.	Years 1 to 3.
2		<p>Increase in the numbers of children adopted in Waltham Forest through the promotion of the Early Permanence initiative working alongside the CORAM adoption agency.</p>				

3	<b>In-house Children’s Residential, Respite and Contact Centre Services – Lester House</b>	Increase existing respite provision for parents and carers promoting improved placement stability by providing essential breaks for those providing care.	Lester House respite / short breaks unit open on Sundays, making the service operational 24/7.	LBWF Service Lead – Lester House – In-House Residential Care Home.	In progress.	April 2025.
4		Creating a dedicated space within the unit for young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) to be able to engage in positive activities.	Extend usage of the respite / short breaks space during ‘quiet hours’ - between 10am – 3pm for additional positive activity use.	LBWF Service Lead – Lester House – In-House Residential Care Home.	In progress.	April 2025.
5	<b>Special Educational Needs &amp; Disabilities (SEND)</b>	Implementation of Waltham Forest’s Local Area Vision and priorities for supporting children looked after with SEND and their families.	SEND Strategy, Action and Implementation Plan 2024-27.	LBWF SEND Team.	In progress.	January 2025.



**Priority 2: Ensuring all children and young people have access to safe, stable, and supportive accommodation.**

	Service	Outcome / Impact	Action	Lead	Status	Timescale
1	<b>In – house Fostering Services</b>	Increased pool of local foster carers, providing a safe, stable and loving home.	Waltham Forest to lead cluster of five local authorities from Redbridge, Barking & Dagenham, Tower Hamlets, and Newham to create a front-door recruitment and retention hub, boosting approval of foster carers in areas of specific shortage and addressing retention through better support to existing foster carers.  This programme is funded by the Department for Education (DfE).	LBWF Fostering and Adoption Service.	In progress.	Years 1 to 3.
2		Increased pool of local foster carers, providing a safe, stable and loving home.	To create three extra Mockingbird Constellations in 2024, in addition to the existing three Hubs already in place, taking the total number of LBWF constellations to six.  This model will promote expert peer support, joint planning, training and social interaction amongst foster carers.	LBWF Fostering and Adoption Service.	In progress.	Years 1 to 3.
3	<b>Independent Fostering Agency Services</b>	Increased number of good quality independent foster care homes as close to the borough as possible.	Join the London Borough of Newham’s Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for the commissioning of independent foster carers for LBWF children.	LBWF Integrated Commissioning Team.	In progress.	April 2025.

		Introduce new, increased payment mechanism for foster carers to prevent breakdown in alternative home provisions.	Provide increased support to foster carers of children with complex needs. Increased payments will be provided to ensure needs of the child and young person can continue to be met at home. This will avert the need for children to move to specialist residential homes.  Additionally, greater support for foster carers will allow some children to move into family settings from existing residential provisions.	LBWF Fostering and Adoption Service.	In progress.	April 2025.
4	<b>16+ Semi Independent Accommodation &amp; Support Services (SIA)</b>	Increased number of good quality 16+ Semi Independent Accommodation providers.	Work with all 16+ Semi Independent Providers to ensure service delivery meets revised OFSTED / DfE Regulations implemented in November 2023.  Extend and expand current 16+ Semi Independent Accommodation Framework to May 2026 to ensure continued supply of good quality provision.	LBWF Integrated Commissioning Team.	In progress.	April 2025.
6	<b>Children’s Residential Care Homes - External</b>	Increased number of in-borough residential care providers providing alternative homes for LBWF children.	Join the London Borough of Newham’s Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for the commissioning of residential care home placements for Waltham Forest children.	LBWF Integrated Commissioning Team.	In progress.	April 2025.
7		Develop additional alternative homes for children with complex physical and emotional health needs in collaboration with other local	Evaluation of value for money and effectiveness of current membership of the North east London Commissioning Programme (NELCP).	LBWF Integrated Commissioning Team.	In progress.	Years 1 to 3.

		authorities or in partnership with specialist providers.	<p>Alternative strategic alliances will be developed with other boroughs or with providers of care directly to meet Waltham Forest’s complex care needs.</p> <p>The London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LIIA), the sector-led improvement partnership for children’s services and hosted by London Councils will offer opportunities for collaboration in this area.</p>			
8	<b>Emergency accommodation unit</b>	<p>Reduction in the number of children who are kept in police stations whilst under Police Protection Orders.</p> <p>A police station is not suitable accommodation for a young person who may have experienced trauma.</p>	<p>Development of an emergency place of safety within the Family Contact Centre, which is part of a LBWF owned multi-purpose facility at Lester House, for young people whilst their ongoing care arrangements are determined.</p>	<p>LBWF Integrated Commissioning Team.</p> <p>LBWF Service Lead – Lester House – In House Residential Care Home.</p>	In progress.	April 2025.
9	<b>‘Crash Pad’ provision</b>	<p>Reduction in the number of children and young people who formally become Children Looked After by virtue of remaining under the care of the council for more than 24 hours.</p>	<p>Development of a place of safety with associated care and support arrangements within Lester House.</p> <p>The aim will be that a young person could remain in this provision for up to 24 hours without any permanent changes being made to their existing accommodation or care arrangements.</p>	<p>LBWF Integrated Commissioning Team.</p> <p>LBWF Service Lead – Lester House – In House Residential Care Home.</p>	In progress.	April 2025.

10	<b>Pan London Commissioning Vehicle (PLCV) for the development of Secure Accommodation.</b>	<p>Provision of secure residential accommodation in London.</p> <p>Currently a young person may be required to travel significant distances, potential anywhere in England, to access this specialist accommodation.</p>	<p>Led by the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance, this is a joint development with other London Local Authorities for a secure residential children’s care home provision in London.</p> <p>Initial proposals suggest this provision will be in Waltham Forest.</p>	Pan London Commissioning Alliance.	On-going.	April 2028.
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<b>Priority 3: Supporting young people by building their independence.</b>						
	Service	Outcome / Impact	Action	Lead	Status	Timescale
1	<b>Leaving Care Hub</b>	<p>Equip young people with the necessary skills and support for independent living and preparing for adulthood.</p> <p>Practical and emotional support will be provided with the Leaving Care Hub also a place where young people can use as a drop-in to meet and socialise with other young people.</p> <p>Young people will successfully transition into adulthood reducing the risk of negative outcomes such as homelessness, unemployment, mental health issues or involvement in the criminal justice system.</p>	Development of the former George Mitchell Secondary School Craft Design and Technology (CDT) block on Farmer Road to accommodate a new purpose-built Leaving Care Hub which will also include three to six self-contained residential units to prepare care leavers for independent living.	LBWF Leaving Care Team.	In progress.	Years 1 to 3.
2	<b>Gap Homes / Supported Lodgings</b>	Increased number of stand-alone accommodations accessed through LBWF’s Housing Department for care	LBWF’s Housing Department are exploring opportunities to develop further accommodation in the borough with specialist providers in this area. This will	LBWF Housing Department.	In progress.	Years 1 to 3.

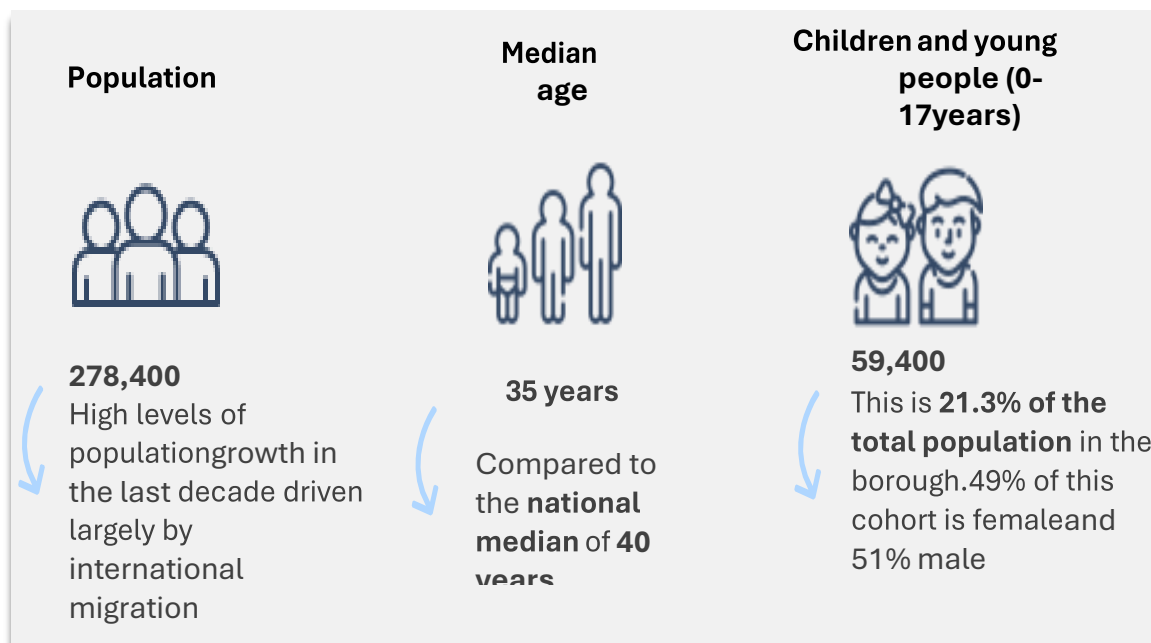
		<p>leavers transitioning out of care and wishing to live independently.</p> <p>This will provide young people who may not be ready for independent living, their own home with support provided by an on-site care provider.</p>	<p>look to replicate and build upon existing provision provided in partnership with Centre Point.</p>			
<b>3</b>	<b>Employment Support</b>	<p>Improving employment outcomes for young people by working in partnership with local businesses and Voluntary Sector organisations.</p>	<p>Paid employment and apprenticeships within the council and with local businesses such as Countryside Partnerships, Centre Point and Morgan Sindall are in development.</p>	<p>LBWF Leaving Care Team.</p>	<p>On-going.</p>	<p>April 2025.</p>

## Appendix Two – Children’s Sufficiency Strategy: Population Analysis.

The children and young people population analysis within this section has informed the Children’s Sufficiency Strategy and associated Action Plan.

Waltham Forest is an outer London borough in east London that has a mixture of both inner and outer London characteristics. The north of the borough is greener and less densely populated with larger homes and an older population, while in the south, the population is younger and more transient with residents more likely to live in private rented accommodation and in overcrowded conditions.

The resident population of Waltham Forest on Census Day 2021 was 278,400 people (representing a 20,000 or a +7.8% increase from the previous census). These statistics represent a slower pace of population growth, compared to the previous decade (2001-2011), when the increase in local borough population was twice as large (40,000, +18.1%). Census 2021 data shows lower counts of both younger children (0-9) and people aged 65+ in Waltham Forest than was previously understood from pre-census official mid-year estimates, this is a similar picture across London.



Waltham Forest is one of the most ethnically diverse boroughs in London. Approximately half of its residents (47%)<sup>1</sup> are from an ethnic minority background; around two-fifths of residents are born outside the UK and around one in five are European Union nationals.

Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 59% of all children living in the area. The ethnic make-up of children and young people aged 0-

<sup>1</sup> [ONS, Census 2021, table TS009](#)

17 in Waltham Forest comprises of Asian/AsianBritish (24%), White British/Irish (28%) and Black/Black British (15%) followed by White Other (12%), Mixed/Multiple ethnicities (14%) and “Other” ethnic group (6%)<sup>2</sup>.

The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language is 43% in state-funded primary schools (national average 22%), and 42% in state-funded secondary schools (the national average is 18%)<sup>3</sup>.

### Domestic migration

More residents have moved out to other local authorities than people who have chosen to make Waltham Forest their home. Waltham Forest’s net outflow was approximately 21,000 people through domestic migration in the 12-month period to June 2023. The top places which people leave Waltham Forest to go to live in are Redbridge, Newham, Epping Forest and Barking and Dagenham. The inflow of residents into the borough is from a wider geography with the top five areas being Epping Forest, Nottingham, Leicester, Luton, and Bristol.

### Child poverty and children living on relatively low income.

- For the year ending 2022/23, there were 14,113 children living in families with relatively low income in Waltham Forest which is the equivalent of 25% of the 0–15-year-old population.
- Waltham Forest is ranked 8<sup>th</sup> among London Boroughs exhibiting one of the highest proportions of children impacted by relative low incomes.

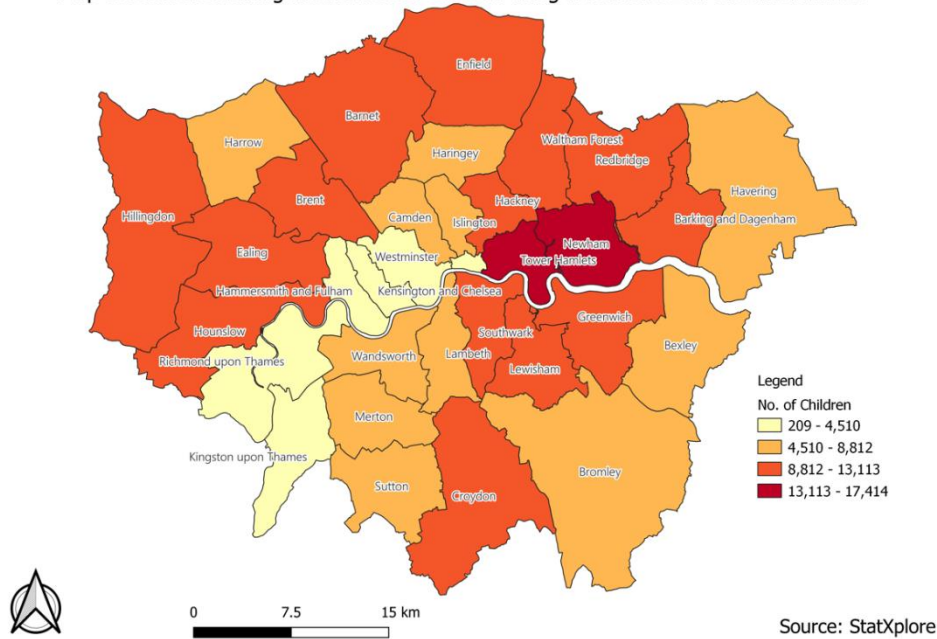
Period	No. of children living with families in relative low income			
	Children			
	Waltham Forest	Minimum for All London Boroughs (excl. City)	Mean for All London Boroughs (excl. City)	Maximum for All London Boroughs (excl. City)
2015/16	14,364	2,437	9,910	21,798
2016/17	14,820	2,375	10,293	22,945
2017/18	17,112	2,918	11,957	25,490
2018/19	17,670	2,889	12,518	26,598
2019/20	18,365	2,889	13,235	27,916
2020/21	16,639	2,631	12,041	24,957
2021/22	14,635	2,602	11,358	23,112
2022/23	14,113	2,571	10,775	22,551

<sup>2</sup> ONS, Census 2021, Ethnic group by sex and age

<sup>3</sup> 2022/2023 School Census, DfE

Source: Stat-Xplore

Map of London showing distribution of Children living in Relative Low Income families

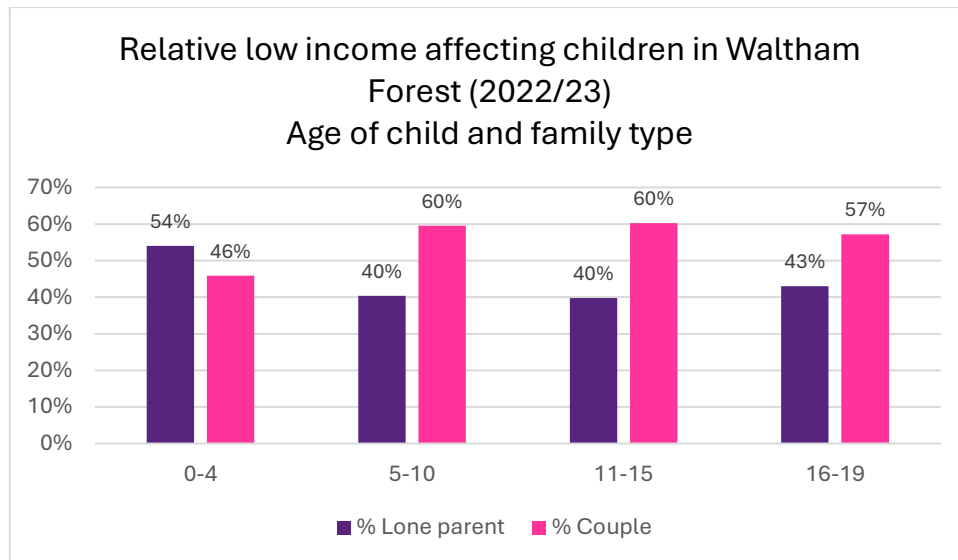


Between 2015/16 to 2022/23, Waltham Forest consistently ranked between 25th and 29th place out of 32 Local Authorities in London, in terms of the number of children living in relative low-income families. These ranks are in the bottom quartile (bottom 25%), indicating that Waltham Forest has persistently been an area of high relative child poverty in London.

- There are proportionally more children affected by relative low income in families with couple parents (57% of the total in 2022/23).
- 29% of the children affected in 2022/23 are 5-10 years-olds.
- There is a disproportion in the working status between the lone parent and couple families in relative low income. In 2022/23, 72% of children from relative low-income families are from working families, while 28% are from non-working families.

Research conducted by Liverpool and Huddersfield universities, found that a 1% increase in child poverty rates are associated with an additional 5 children entering care per 100,000 in the same year. Children’s exposure to poverty creates and compounds adversity, driving poor health and outcomes later in life.





The proportion of children receiving free school meals in state-funded primary schools is 21.8% (national average 24.3%), and in state-funded secondary schools it is 28.9% (national average 24.1%)<sup>4</sup>.

### Cost of living

Cost of living was highlighted as the number one resident concern in the latest Resident Insight Survey, with 1 in 3 residents expressing significant apprehension about the issue. In 2023/24, the council through the Household Support fund (HSF) provided residents with support towards food, energy and other essential costs.

Community organisations also provide support to residents who may not otherwise come forward to the council for help. Since the pandemic, the Community Resilience Alliance made up of Waltham Forest voluntary organisations and partners from education and the public sector meet regularly to consider areas of concern in the community and consider resources which could support vulnerable families.

### Household composition in Waltham Forest

The fastest growing household category is co-habiting couples without dependent children. This group has increased from 6,400 in 2011 to 10,300 in 2021, marking a 59% increase over the last decade.

The prevalence of lone parent households is also significant, accounting for (16% or approximately 17,000) households, and has grown by (7%) over the last decade. However, there is a distinct contrast in the trend between lone parents living with dependent children and those with non-dependent children (e.g., a mother with an 18+ son). The former experienced a 7% decrease in the last decade, totalling (10,000) households, whilst the latter saw a 38% increase, reaching (6,900) households in 2021.

<sup>4</sup> [Summer 2021/2022 School Census, DfE](#)

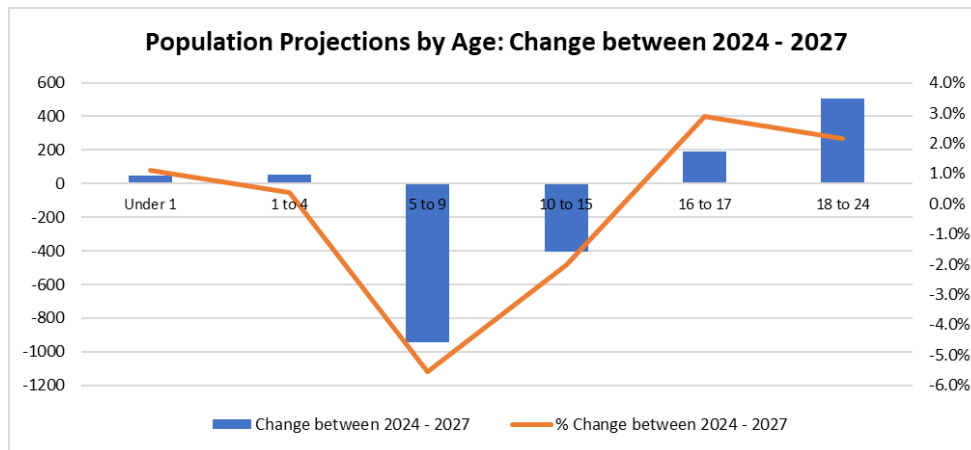
### Children and young people demographics

Waltham Forest population of 278,400 (Census 2021) is growing but at a slower pace than previously understood. Of this total, 61,300 or 22% of the population were children and young people who live in the borough. 49% of under 18-year-olds in the borough are female and 51% male<sup>5</sup>.

The Greater London Authority (GLA) 2023 round of population projections estimate that the Waltham Forest population will increase to a total of 292,900 by 2027, an increase of 14,500 (5.2%). The fastest growing groups are projected to be those aged 65+ (+17.2%)

For the 0-24 age cohort, projections are suggesting a steady decline in the rate of increase to 2027. This is consistent with the declining birth rate in Waltham Forest since 2017. The 5-9 age cohort has the highest expected rate of decline of -6.1% over the next 3 years.

### Waltham Forest Population Projection between 2024 and 2027.



GLA 2021-based Demographic Projections (BPO), published January 2023

<sup>5</sup> GLA 2021-based Demographic Projections (BPO), published January 2023

Please note that all ONS and GLA (BPO) projections are taken from the most recent 5-year trend migration scenario compared to the 2021 baseline from Census 2021. All population projections are highly uncertain and should be regarded as such. None of the projections take account of the impact of macro-economic factors or Government policy. This is particularly pertinent considering the cost-of-living crisis and other socio-economic related factors.

### Population projections by ward

The number of 0–17-year-olds is projected to decrease by 1060, (-1.7%) from 2024 to 2027.

Population projections aged 0-17 by ward						
Ward	2024	2025	2026	2027	Change 2024-2027	% Change 2024-2027
Cann Hall	3690	3653	3594	3537	-153	-4.1%
Cathall	2079	2051	2037	2021	-58	-2.8%
Chapel End	3689	3659	3651	3675	-14	-0.4%
Chingford Green	2129	2119	2114	2103	-26	-1.2%
Endlebury	1855	1875	1866	1857	1	0.1%
Forest	3611	3607	3601	3608	-3	-0.1%
Grove Green	3257	3223	3203	3175	-82	-2.5%
Hale End & Highams Park South	2235	2231	2220	2215	-21	-0.9%
Hatch Lane & Highams Park North	3010	2999	2988	2956	-53	-1.8%
High Street	2344	2354	2343	2328	-16	-0.7%
Higham Hill	3845	3812	3779	3724	-120	-3.1%
Hoe Street	2934	2860	2802	2738	-195	-6.7%
Larkswood	3132	3125	3104	3095	-37	-1.2%
Lea Bridge	3330	3323	3326	3343	13	0.4%
Leyton	3316	3349	3348	3357	41	1.3%
Leytonstone	2530	2521	2530	2539	10	0.4%
Markhouse	2136	2116	2093	2073	-64	-3.0%
St James	2459	2466	2481	2493	34	1.4%
Upper Walthamstow	2004	1980	1960	1939	-65	-3.2%
Valley	3262	3238	3209	3171	-92	-2.8%
William Morris	3115	3074	3032	2979	-136	-4.4%
Wood Street	2348	2348	2339	2321	-27	-1.2%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>62307</b>	<b>61982</b>	<b>61621</b>	<b>61245</b>	<b>-1062</b>	<b>-1.7%</b>

GLA 2021-based Demographic Projections (BPO), published January 2023

Projections are subject to change as they are revised annually.

The number of 18–24-year-olds is projected to increase at a slower rate than previously expected by around 510 people (2.2%) from 2024 to 2027. Chapel End Ward is projected to have the largest growth with 90 or 7.2% and Cann Hall the greatest decline with 53 fewer children in this cohort, (-2.9%).

Population projections aged 18-24 by ward						
Ward	2024	2025	2026	2027	Change 2024-2027	% Change 2024-2027
Cann Hall	1862	1830	1819	1809	-53	-2.9%
Cathall	1037	1048	1056	1070	33	3.2%
Chapel End	1251	1278	1316	1341	91	7.2%
Chingford Green	766	769	767	783	17	2.2%
Endlebury	700	686	699	704	4	0.6%
Forest	1428	1430	1467	1499	71	4.9%
Grove Green	1332	1353	1348	1359	26	2.0%
Hale End & Highams Park South	715	712	707	700	-16	-2.2%
Hatch Lane & Highams Park North	954	952	937	939	-15	-1.5%
High Street	866	866	863	857	-9	-1.1%
Higham Hill	1308	1317	1301	1311	4	0.3%
Hoe Street	1240	1252	1245	1246	6	0.5%
Larkswood	943	964	983	988	45	4.7%
Lea Bridge	1218	1240	1268	1289	70	5.8%
Leyton	1409	1424	1450	1461	53	3.8%
Leytonstone	1200	1212	1226	1245	46	3.8%
Markhouse	871	878	884	887	16	1.8%
St James	921	926	953	992	71	7.8%
Upper Walthamstow	651	651	646	642	-9	-1.4%
Valley	1195	1219	1237	1265	70	5.9%
William Morris	1004	988	975	980	-23	-2.3%
Wood Street	699	693	693	707	9	1.2%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>23568</b>	<b>23688</b>	<b>23839</b>	<b>24075</b>	<b>507</b>	<b>2.2%</b>

### Children and young people by ethnicity

The 2021 census outlined Waltham Forest as the 18<sup>th</sup> most diverse local authority in England and Wales with 47% of the population from an ethnic minority background.

- White (British/Irish) residents make up 34% of the total population.
- People of Asian background make up 20% of the borough.
- The Black population is 15%.
- 19% Other White.
- 6% Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups and
- 6% Other Ethnic Groups.

In 2021, there was a 159% rise in Romanian-born residents (11,000 or 4%) and 33% decrease in Polish-born residents (5,500 or 2%) since 2011.

The population in Waltham Forest is continuing to become more ethnically diverse. This is supported by the continued growth of younger BAME groups. White British/Irish is the biggest individual ethnic category among the under 18s in the borough (29%), followed closely by the Asian/Asian British population (24%) and Black/Black British residents (16%).

Ethnic Group	All	All (%)	Under 18	Under 18 (%)	18-24	18-24 (%)	25+	25+ (%)
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	55542	20%	15077	24%	5446	26%	35019	18%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	41647	15%	9946	16%	4128	20%	27573	14%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	17983	6%	8371	13%	1868	9%	7744	4%
Other ethnic group	16227	6%	3950	6%	1502	7%	10775	6%
White British/Irish	98996	36%	17873	29%	4863	23%	76260	39%
Other White	48027	17%	7416	12%	3310	16%	37301	19%
Grand Total	278422	100%	62633	100%	21117	100%	194672	100%

Source: Census 2021, ONS published June 2023

Around two thirds (59%) of children and young people in Waltham Forest are from BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) groups compared to 47% in overall population.

### Children Looked After (CLA) ethnicity

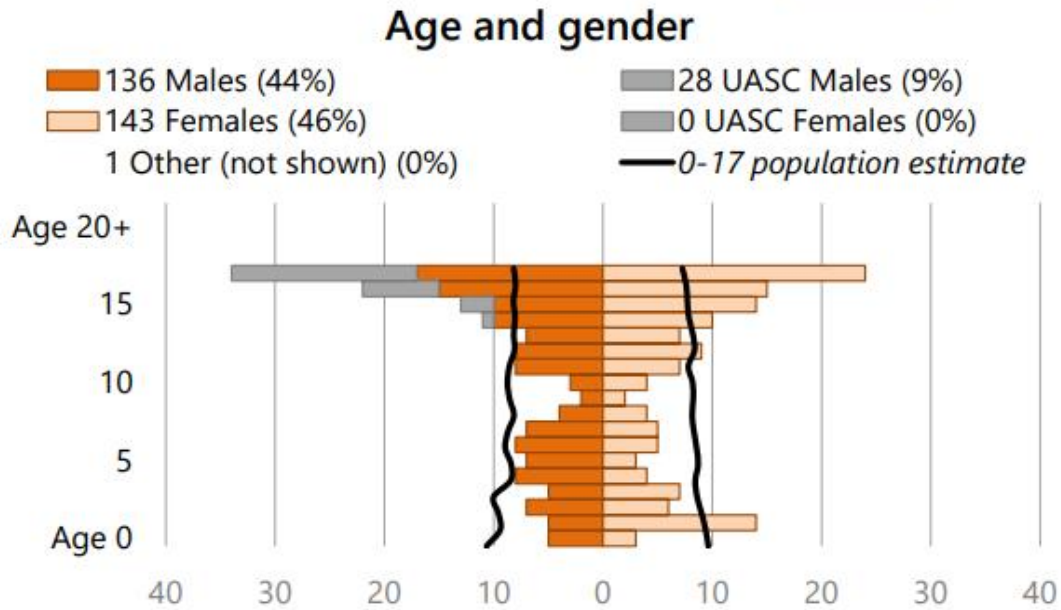
The ethnic profile of CLA 0-17 from White ethnic groups is 9 percentage points lower compared to the same cohort in the general population. In contrast, Mixed and Black/Black British ethnicities are higher in the CLA cohort<sup>6</sup> compared to the proportion in the overall population, by 9 and 12 percentage points, respectively. The proportion of Asian/Asian CLA in Waltham Forest is 9 percentage points lower than the general population.

	Number of Children in Care	Proportion of Children in Care (March 2024)	Proportion of LBWF Population aged 0-17 (Census 2021)
White	95	31%	40%
Black or Black British	86	28%	16%
Mixed	67	22%	13%
Asian or Asian British	47	15%	24%
Other Ethnic Group	12	4%	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>6</sup> Source: Children’s services Analysis Tool, Waltham Forest, March 2022

### Age and gender

As of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, **53% all children looked after in Waltham Forest were male**. Of this male cohort, 9% were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) and 44% were non-UASC. All recorded UASC at this data collection point were male. All UASC children looked after in Waltham Forest are over 13 years old. Almost 90% are aged 15 or older and therefore likely to cease care in the next three years, at which point they will be transferred to the leaving care team for further support as they prepare for adulthood.



*Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F*

Children in Care by Age Group as of March 2024	
Age Group	%
0	3%
1-4	18%
5-9	15%
10-15	33%
16-18	31%

### Age when coming into care<sup>7</sup>

Over a third of children looked after are younger than 10 years old. About a third are aged 10 to 15 and likely to remain in care until their 18th birthday or become eligible care leavers. All but one UASC was over 12 years old when they first came into care. About a third of Waltham Forest’s UASC came into care when they were 16 years or older.

<sup>7</sup> Source: Children’s services Analysis Tool, Waltham Forest, March 2023

Compared to the overall profile of the children and young people in the borough, there are disproportionately more young people aged 10 to 16+ (64%), particularly females amongst the CLA cohort. There are no identified environmental or other factors which would explain this anomaly.

All genders amongst this cohort are vulnerable to exploitation. Addressing these challenges requires finding appropriate alternative living arrangements that prioritise the protection and well-being of such young people. Establishing loving attachments with new caregivers and achieving stability in alternative homes may be more challenging for this group and requires additional time and support through targeted early intervention work.

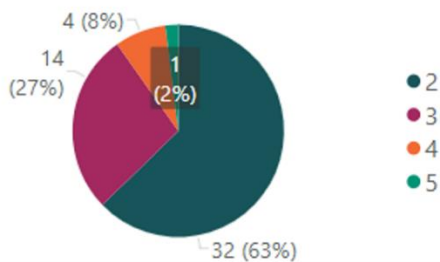
### Disability and health

As of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, 29 out of 309 (9.3%) children looked after were known to have a disability. Disabled children stay in care significantly longer than their peers without a disability. On average, the children in care with a disability in Waltham Forest have been in care for 58 months, compared to the average of 33 months, for children with no disabilities. This often is because a young person with a disability comes into care at a younger age and finding a long-term alternative home with a foster carer or through adoption often takes longer as the young person requires a match with prospective carers who will be able to adequately meet their needs.

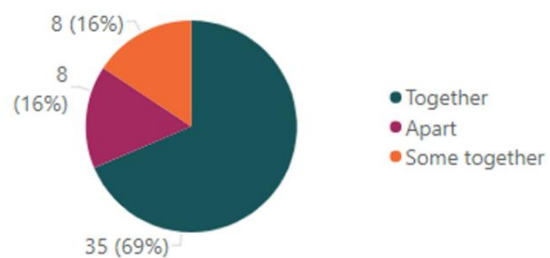
### Sibling groups

The children looked after cohort in Waltham Forest as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 included 127 children with siblings, in 51 Sibling groups. This is significant as when children are placed in care, placements are sought which seek to maintain family relationships. This is not always possible due to the scarcity of placement options resulting in siblings sometimes being separated. Around three quarters of the sibling’s groups in Waltham Forest had 2 siblings (32 out of 51 sibling groups). There were also fourteen 3-sibling-groups, four 4-sibling-groups and one 5-sibling group.

Number and Percentage of Sibling Groups by Size



Number and Percentage of Sibling Groups Placed Together



As of the 31 March 2024, the placement of sibling groups was as follows:

- 69% (35 out of 51) of the sibling groups were placed together, meaning all siblings in these groups live under the same roof.
- 16% (8 out of 51) of the sibling groups were placed separately, which means

- none of the siblings in these groups live together.
- The remaining 16% (8 out of 51) of the sibling groups had at least one set of siblings living together, but not all siblings in these groups were placed together.

The council seeks sibling placements together where possible. Waltham Forest is leading a cluster of 5 local authorities from north east London to create a front-door recruitment and retention hub, which will increase availability and approval of foster carers in areas of specific shortage such as these.

### **Length of time in care**

As of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, 42% of children looked after were under the care of the council for over 2 years with only 11% having entered care in the last 3 months. The council is promoting a ‘family preservation’ approach to sufficiency seeking to reduce the numbers of children that initially come into care.

Additionally, for those children in care the council is increasing the availability of alternative homes with foster carers and adoptive parents to provide nurturing, family environments for young people. This is being implemented through expansion of the fostering recruitment hub and specialist work undertaken with the adoptive specialists Coram.

<b>Length of time in care (as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024) for children under 16 years old.</b>	<b>Number of CIC</b>	<b>% Children Looked After</b>
<b>3 months or less</b>	24	11%
<b>More than 3 months but less than or equal to 6 months</b>	16	7%
<b>More than 6 months but less than 1 year</b>	35	16%
<b>1 year but less than 2 years</b>	51	24%
<b>2 years and over</b>	91	42%
<b>Total</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Note: length of time is calculated based on the date on which the child started to be looked after.*