

Corporate Parenting Strategy

2025/28





A poem by Lewisham Children in Care

What is care?

Care is an ambition

Care is a place you ask for help

Care is a journey

An energetic environment

Care is a bright yellow flower, open

It's remembering our roots

Love plus trust equals friendship

Care is equal

Care can fly, its kindness, it's safe

Care is complicated

Care-people think anxiety comes

From homelessness

Some feel complete protection

Some feel scared

Some feel trapped

Some people change

Is it action, nurture, being delighted in

Care is colour

Care is big

Care is dark and light

Care is with everyone

Care is not giving up

Contents

Foreword (Lead Member)	4
Introduction	5
What is corporate parenting and who are corporate parents?	6
Principles and values	7
Lewisham's vision	9
Our Children in Care and the Care Leaver Profile	10
Care Leavers' Local Offer	12
The Children in Care Council and Young People's Participation	13
The Lewisham Pledge, our ambitions for improving the care experience of our children and young people	15
Corporate Parenting Governance	16
Measures of success (2025–2028)	17



Foreword by Lead Member



Lewisham's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025-2028 outlines our commitment to the wellbeing of children and young people in our care. Elected members, council staff, and partner agencies share a collective responsibility to ensure that those in our care and care leavers receive the highest standard of support, enabling them to lead happy, fulfilling, and healthy lives. The Strategy aims to align our efforts towards shared objectives that promote safety, stability, wellbeing, and independence.

Central to our approach is the belief that every child and young person in our care deserves the warmth, stability, and opportunities that a loving family would provide. We strive to create an environment where their achievements are celebrated, their voices valued, and their individual identities respected. Through ongoing reflection and learning, we are determined to break down barriers and address inequalities, so that each child and care leaver can access the resources and relationships they need to thrive.

Our guiding principles are built around six pillars: being proud parents, creating a sense of belonging, supporting health and wellbeing, fostering aspiration, promoting independence, and ensuring that every child and young person has a voice. These commitments are not just aspirational - they are embedded in our daily practice and informed by the experiences and feedback of those we serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edison Huynh'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Councillor Edison Huynh
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

1. Introduction

The Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2025–2028 provides an overview of what we want to achieve over the duration. It talks about what we want to do and what we promise for children in care and care leavers. It explains how we'll work with others to make sure children in care and care leavers are safe, get all the support they need to make the best of opportunities. As corporate parents, we support children and young people to aim high and follow their dreams. The corporate parenting plan sets out in detail the actions required to achieve our strategic goals.

In Lewisham, we are proud of what our children in care and care leavers have achieved, and we appreciate all that they add to our community, we celebrate our rich and diverse culture. As a Borough of Sanctuary, we welcome people seeking safety - especially young people who arrive on their own as unaccompanied asylum seekers.

The Council takes its role as a corporate parent very seriously, working closely with everyone in Lewisham, schools, families, health professionals, police and the wider community to champion children in care and care leavers. We recognise that every child and care leaver is unique with their own individual talents, experiences and ambitions. As corporate parents we want our children and young people to aim high and take chances and live happy, successful lives in Lewisham. Lewisham Council passed a motion recognising the unique challenges care leavers face and the need for care leaver status to be recognised is protected characteristic.

The Council is committed to challenging racism and the Children and Young People Directorate (CYP) has been at the forefront of the development of anti-racist practice within Lewisham. As corporate parents we are committed to challenging racism and discrimination, we celebrate the many backgrounds and cultures of the children and young people we support.

We know that family relationships can sometimes be complicated for children in care and care leavers. Whenever we can, we help children and young people to stay in touch with their families, this includes family in the UK and abroad. In early 2024, Lewisham joined nine other councils as a Wave 2 Pathfinder. This is a government initiative to test new ways of working with children and families. In Lewisham we have focused on working with schools, the National Health Service and the police to improve help for families, protect children, and support families to make important decisions together. Lewisham is seen as a leader in this important work.



2. What is corporate parenting and who are corporate parents?

Corporate parenting is a shared responsibility of the Council, this includes councillors, staff, and partner agencies. As corporate parents we work together to achieve the best outcomes for children in care and care leavers. Our role is to keep them safe, support their wellbeing, and help them reach their potential.

Good parents care about every aspect of their child's life: safety, health, education, identity, friendships, and future. They protect, support, and encourage their children, celebrate achievements, and stay involved even after they turn 18. Corporate parenting should mirror this as closely as possible.

This strategy and action plan aim to ensure we can always answer:

The role of the Lead Member

The Lead Member is a councillor, who has the political responsibility to ensure the Council and partners meet their corporate parenting duties. This includes making sure services meet identified needs and that this strategy is delivered effectively.

The Lead Member makes sure children in care and care leavers are well looked after. They check that services help these young people and that promises made to them are kept.

The role of senior officers and councillors

- Promote awareness of Lewisham's strategy and our collective responsibility as corporate parents
- Understand their needs, including those with disabilities
- Know current services and identify gaps
- Challenge the racism and discrimination that many of our children and young people face
- Champion high aspirations and create opportunities
- Gather feedback from children and young people on how well our pledge is delivered
- Monitor the impact of this strategy

Corporate parenting a legal responsible

The Council's duties as corporate parents are defined on the following legislation.

- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Leaving Care Act 2000
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Children and Social Work Act 2017.

“Would this be good enough for my child?”

3. Principles and values

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced seven corporate parenting principles. Local Authorities must consider these whenever working with children in care or care leavers:

1. Act in their best interests
2. Promote their physical and mental health and wellbeing
3. Encourage them to express their views, wishes, and feelings
4. Take those views into account
5. Help them access and use services
6. Promote high aspirations and secure the best outcomes
7. Keep them safe and provide stability in home, relationships, and education, and/or work

In Lewisham, we want all children to grow up in stable, nurturing families within their support networks. When a child enters care, we will provide a safe home, help them understand their life story and why they are in care. We will work to keep them connected to the things that matter to them, this can be their family, culture, or community. We will champion their interests, celebrate achievements, and have high aspirations for their future.

Care leavers will receive support to develop skills, access services, and stay connected to their communities. They will have a named contact for advice and guidance whenever needed, we will continue encourage and support care leavers follow their dreams.





4. Vision

- Corporate parenting is a privilege and responsibility. The Corporate Parenting Service has primary responsibilities for children in care and care leavers; however, we do not work in isolation corporate parenting is a collective responsibility of the Council and our partners. In Lewisham we recognise that to be successful corporate parents we need to work collaboratively with all stakeholders.
- Our Family Help Service provides early, multi-agency support to families, using a family led practice approach based on Signs of Safety to involve wider family networks in decision-making. We aim to help families stay together and thrive, where possible we want children to stay within their families.
- For children in care, the Signs of Belonging model ensures lasting relationships, stability, and respect for identity and culture
- For care leavers, Signs of Independence focuses on building skills, confidence, and connections to support their transition to adulthood
- We remain committed to supporting young people beyond care, fostering trust, belonging, and resilience, while adapting services to meet their evolving need.
- We recognise the unique challenges unaccompanied asylum-seeking children face, as a bough of sanctuary we are committed to supporting our unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to find home and stability in Lewisham .
- The CYP Directorate applies anti-racist practices recognised by Ofsted and London organisations. Guided by leadership and network groups, we address racial inequality for children, young people, and care leavers, focusing on respect, support, and cultural awareness in care. We also recognise cultural, religious, and festive differences.

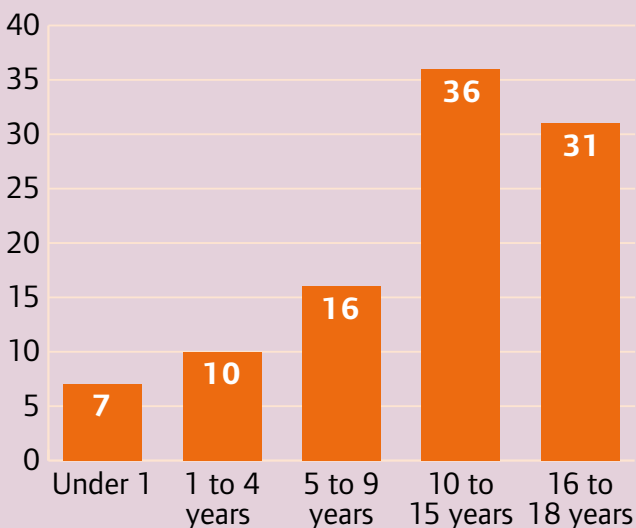


5. Lewisham children in care and care leavers

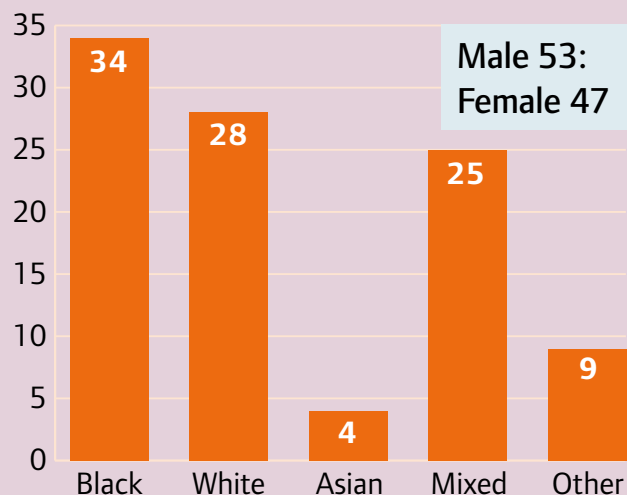
Children looked after



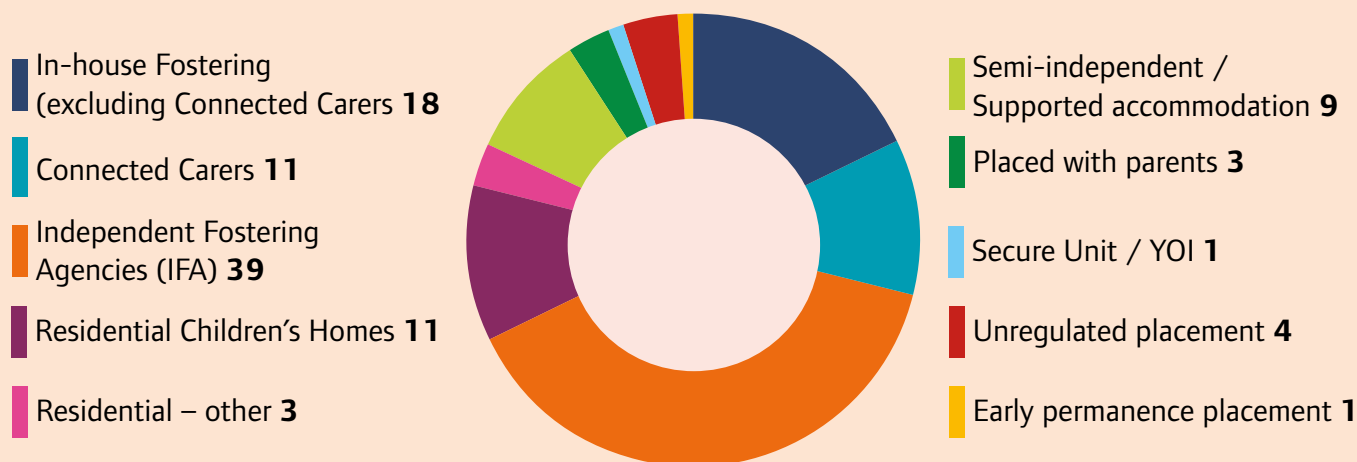
Age as at 31/03/25 – percent



Ethnicity as at 31/03/25 – percent



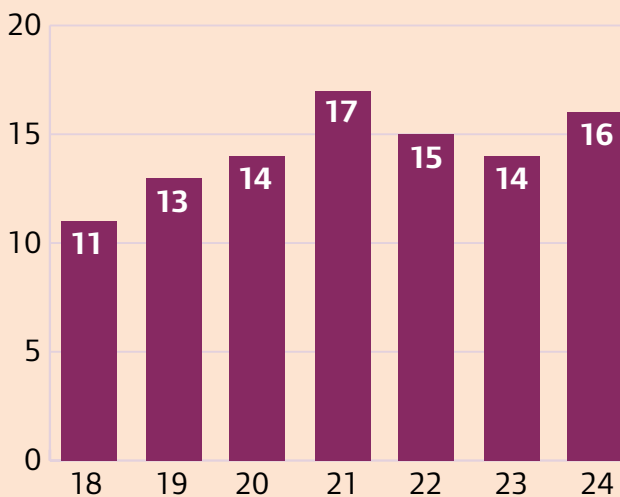
Where our children in care live at 31/03/25 – percent



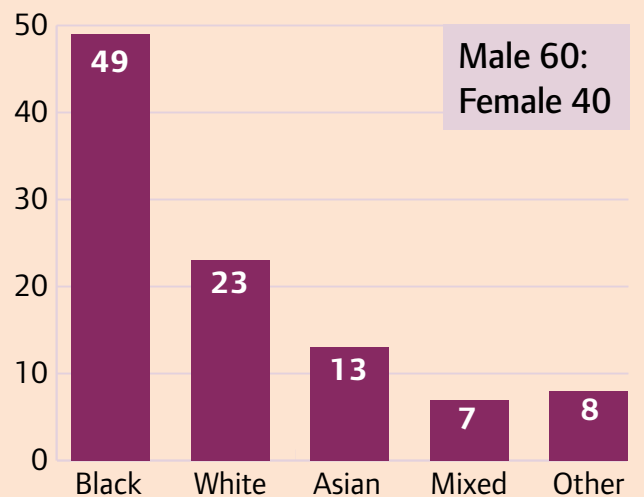
Care leavers



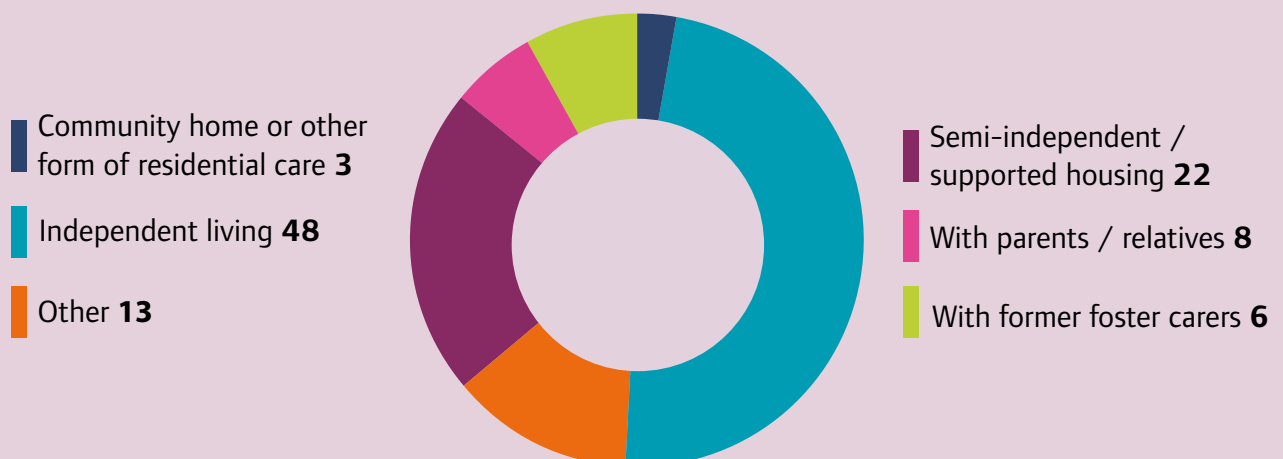
Age at 31/03/25 – percent



Ethnicity at 31/03/25 – percent



Accommodation type – percent



6. Care Leavers' Local Offer

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires us to support care leavers up to age 25 and to publish a Local Offer outlining the services and support available.

The Local Offer is a single, easy-to-use guide to help young people transition to adulthood and independent living. It explains:

- What support is available and who can access it
- Statutory entitlements and discretionary support
- When and how this support will be provided
- Most support continues until age 25 because leaving care does not mean we stop caring. We want care leavers to feel safe, supported, and know where to go for advice.

The Local Offer was co-created with input from the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum to reflect their needs and raise standards of support.

Full details: [Lewisham Care Leavers Local Offer](#)



7. The Children in Care Council (CICC)

The Children in Care Council is made of two groups:

1. Children in Care Group (Up to 15 years old)
2. Elevation Group (16 to 25 years old)

Since 2023, young people have contributed to training and recruitment, consultations and panels, Corporate Parenting Boards, events and the Young Inspectors Programme.

Children in Care Council work closely with our participation lead to organise residential trips, celebration and social events for all ages, plus participation activities. We work with external organisations and local groups to run creative sessions in drama, music, arts, sports, and cooking, helping children and young people build confidence and express their creativity. The poem included in this document was written by a group of children during a facilitated art workshop.

Participation Strategy

As part of developing our Strategy, we are focusing on young people's aspirations and goals. We have introduced Ambassador/Champion Roles in key service areas such as Health, Education, Housing, Participation, and Youth Justice.

These ambassadors will:

- Sit on panels and attend consultations
- Represent the youth voice in their specialist areas
- Take part in external meetings and campaigns
- Organise events to support care-experienced children and young people



Training and recruitment

Children and young people now regularly take part in interviews for social workers and managers, and staff training sessions.

In 2024, CICC and Elevation, with the Council's Participation Officer, created Cultural Competency Training, led by care-experienced young people for staff, professionals, and carers. Our Participation Strategy includes co-producing more training initiatives with care-experienced youth.

Young Inspectors Programme

The Young Inspectors Programme, co-produced with Elevation, is now embedded in service delivery with support from placements and commissioning teams. This programme enables young people to:

- Assess and review residential provider services and homes
- Give feedback to improve quality of services.
- Participate in the design and development of Lewisham future children's homes
- Work collaboratively to create better homes and experiences for children in care and care leavers

Feedback from young people

Young people want to:

- Be involved in foster carer recruitment and attend 'Skills to Foster' and 'Fostering Panel Development Day'
- Join peer support groups, working with CAHMS, Mental Health and Youth Services, joint bids for specific programmes/projects geared towards children in care and care leavers
- Have opportunities to express their views, have their voices heard, using creative methods e.g. drama, art, music therapy, and dance
- Share feedback about reviews, placements, and foster carers by talking to older peers (young ambassadors)
- Be involved in Youth Advisory Boards and Steering Groups
- Take part in the Virtual School Advisory Board to help shape skills and job opportunities
- Become 'Health Champions' to promote health and wellbeing



8. The Lewisham Pledge:

our ambitions for improving the care experience of our children and young people

Our previous strategy set out six key pledges. We consulted with key stakeholders, children and young people and agreed to retain the six strands of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, with the addition of a seventh strand specifically covering Lewisham's of recognition of care leavers as a protected characteristic.

We are proud parents

- Understand what corporate parenting means
- Promote inclusivity and diversity
- Make sure children live in safe, caring communities
- Improve care and pathway planning

Having a voice

- Make a difference
- Be listened to and have my experiences valued
- Be involved in my care and pathway plan
- Help improve social work

This is my home

- Know where I will grow up
- Get good quality care
- Stay in the same place as much as possible
- Feel safe and secure at home

Aspirations and ambitions

- Reach my potential
- Be the best version of myself
- Get involved and have fun

Healthy and well

- Be healthy and well
- Understand health information
- Have hobbies and interests
- Stay connected to important people

Being independent

- Managing my money
- Looking after myself
- Knowing where to get advice and help
- Asking questions if I am unsure

9. Governance

Our Corporate Parenting Board is an advisory group chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Young People. It meets four times a year and membership includes:

- Councillors
- Key council officers with lead responsibility for corporate parenting.
- Indent Reviewing Officers representation at a senior officer level
- Children in Care groups, supported by the Participation Officer
- Health agency representatives with responsibility for corporate parenting.
- Partners and others, e.g. foster carer representative, Young Mayors group.
- Other agencies, officers, community organisations or individuals may be invited to contribute as deemed appropriate by the chair.

The role and responsibilities of our Corporate Parenting Board is to:

- Quarterly check progress of the strategy and action plan. Dedicating each meeting to one strand to comprehensively address all six stands over the life of the strategy.
- Annually, dedicate one board meeting to a “take over session”. This meeting will be co-chaired by a member of Elevate (Children in Care Council). The agenda will be developed in partnership with the Lead Member, with the support of senior officers.
- Promote Lewisham Council’s corporate parenting responsibilities among councillors and officers, including providing guidance to Mayor and Cabinet, and ensuring suitable training arrangements are in place for Councillors and other relevant individuals
- Encourage broader stakeholder engagement, particularly by involving schools and ensuring they understand and fulfil their role as corporate parents.
- Identify and review strategic priorities and provide a platform for councillors to monitor the progress of all services for children in care and care leavers, supporting the effective implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- Monitor the delivery and effectiveness of Lewisham’s Pledge and Local Offer. Check if they are being effectively delivered and make sure, they really help children in care and care leavers achieve the best they can.
- Advocate for care-experienced children and young people, empowering them to participate in evaluating and shaping services and contributing to decision-making processes to enhance their experience within Lewisham’s care system. Stand up for children and young people, help them to give feedback on services and get involved in decisions, so their experiences in care are better.
- Foster effective collaboration among all partners in the best interests of children in care and care leavers, holding each partner accountable for their contributions to service provision. Make sure everyone does their part to provide good services.
- Ensure strategies are effectively addressing equality and disproportionality issues, such as the representation of certain groups, black children over-represented in missing episodes and child exploitation.

10. Measures of success (2025-2028)

Strategic strands	Measures of success	Current position (April-2025)	Ambition
We are proud parents	Where possible and safe to do so we will support children and young people to remain within their family network. Reduce in the number of children in care.	452	410* (or in line with sat neighbour)
	We will make sure our children live in safe homes and caring communities. Statutory visits to children in time-scale (within 30 days).	92.1%	90% (above)
This is my home	Stay local, where possible we will support our children to remain living in Lewisham. Less of our children will be living outside a 20-mile radius of Lewisham.	18%	15% (below)
	Stay in the same place, where possible we will try to ensure that our children experience a stable placement. More children under 16 will live at the same placement for at least 2.5 years.	63%	70% (above)
	Get good quality care. Develop Lewisham owned and run residential provision.	0 beds	6 beds
	Expand pool of Lewisham foster carers . More children will live in a Lewisham foster placement.	32%	40% (above)
Having a voice	Be involved in my care and pathway plan. Can chair my own review meetings, if I wanted to. Children will have their review meetings on time.	90.9%	95% (above)
	Be listened to and have my experiences valued. Introduction of annual Corporate Parenting Board takeover meeting.		Annually from 2026.
	All children and young people to have access to independent advocate or mentor. Increased take-up in advocacy services.		% offered % taken up
	Children and young people will have the opportunity to help raise social work standards in Lewisham. Children and young people to be represented on all relevant CYP interview panels.	75% of interview CYP panels to include young people	Consulting this can be best measured

Strategic strands	Measures of success	Current position (April-2025)	Ambition
Healthy and well	Be healthy, all children to a comprehensive assessment of their health needs when they come in to care. Initial Health Assessment.	41%	75% (above)
	We will ensure all children enjoy a healthy lifestyle with exercise, nutritious food, and dental care. Provide emotional safety and access to mental health services when needed. Health Assessments (Review).	96%	95% (above)
	Be the best version of myself. All children to feel happy and cared for in their current living situation. Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire.	78%	80% (above) 14 (Average below)
Aspirations and ambitions	Get involved and have fun. Increased attendance at participation events.		Increase attendance, to be measures annually, with feedback from CYP
	Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) will feel secure and supported in Lewisham, with full access to our local services. More children to have the opportunity to gain UK citizenship.		Increasing the number of UASC gaining UK citizenship
	Aspire to achieve one's full potential. Every child receives support to pursue their unique interests and passions. Attain academic success while enjoying the educational experience. Personal Education Plans.	92%	92% (above)
Being independent	Looking after myself, managing my money, knowing where to get advice and help. We will see an increase in number of the leaving care hubs.		Annual feedback questionnaire
	Reach my potential, live a happy and fulfilling life. More care leavers participating in education, employment or training (age 18-21)	52%	60% (above)
	Having a home of my own. Successfully moving for the housing pathway and maintaining a social tenancy. Care leavers in suitable accommodation.	90%	90% (above)

