

London Borough Of Havering

Children's Services Sufficiency Needs Assessment and Strategy 2025- 2028

London Borough Of Havering
2/18/2025

Document Control

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Equality & Health Impact Assessment record

1	Title of activity	Children's Services Sufficiency Needs Assessment and Strategy 2025-2028		
2	Type of activity	Sufficiency Strategy		
3	Scope of activity	The Children's Services Sufficiency Needs Assessment and Strategy sets out our commissioning priorities which will enable the council to deliver its ambitions and continue to meet its Sufficiency Duty for placements for children in care which is a statutory requirement set out in Section 22G of the Children's Act 1989.		
4a	Are you changing, introducing a new, or removing a service, policy, strategy or function?	Yes	If the answer to <u>any</u> of these questions is ' YES ', please continue to question 5.	If the answer to <u>all</u> of the questions (4a, 4b & 4c) is ' NO ', please go to question 6.
4b	Does this activity have the potential to impact (either positively or negatively) upon people (9 protected characteristics)?	Yes		
4c	Does the activity have the potential to impact (either positively or negatively) upon any factors which determine people's health and wellbeing?	Yes		
5	If you answered YES:	Please complete the EqHIA in Section 2 of this document. Please see Appendix 1 for Guidance.		
6	<p>If you answered NO: (Please provide a clear and robust explanation on why your activity does not require an EqHIA. This is essential in case the activity is challenged under the Equality Act 2010.)</p> <p>Please keep this checklist for your audit trail.</p>			

Date	Completed by	Review date
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Foreword

As the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the proud Corporate Parent to over 600 children and young people, I am pleased to introduce our Sufficiency Strategy. The strategy outlines how we will ensure high-quality services and support for the children in our care and for our care experienced young people, enabling them to flourish in inclusive and nurturing environments.

Fundamentally, it sets out how we aim to provide good quality 'homes' and 'care arrangements' for children in our care that meet their individual needs. It reflects on our wider service priorities and our vision of creating a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment for children and young people in Havering. It also details our strategic aims, the steps we will take, and the actions we will implement to ensure the best possible outcomes.

We acknowledge that based on our current insights locally and nationally, our key areas of focus to ensure sufficiency of homes for our children for the next few years is to drive the following ambitions. We want;

- Our Children in care to live within the borough where it is safe to do so
- Our Children in care to have access to experienced, skilled foster carers
- Our Children with additional and complex needs to have access to services and support that is proportionate to their individual needs
- Our Children in care to be supported to reach their educational potential

This strategy aligns with our vision for children, our wider service priorities and [our Pledge](#) to the children in our care, ensuring that our promises as corporate parents meet their expectations.

Our children are at the heart of everything we do, and this strategy will enable us to make a significant difference in their lives. I am immensely proud of our commitment, dedicated officers, and the work we have accomplished so far as we continue to work diligently to provide them with the opportunities they deserve, ensuring their well-being, safety, and giving them all access to nurturing and enriching environments. We will continue to strive for excellence, create pathways for success for all the children in Havering, and ensure their bright futures.

Councillor Oscar Ford
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People



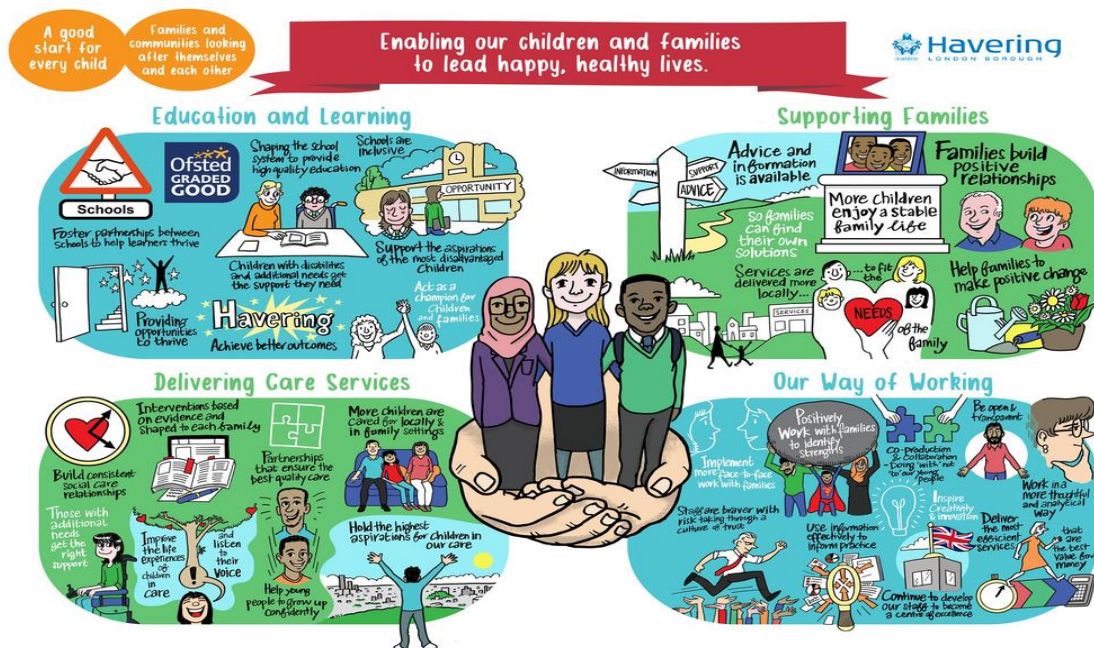
1. Introduction

The London Borough of Havering is ambitious for all the children and young people in the Borough to lead happy healthy lives. As set out in our Corporate Parenting Strategy, we want to deliver our WISH for all our children in care and care experienced young people to be Well, Inspired, Safe and Heard. As such we are committed to providing children and young people with high quality parenting, care and the right support, at the right time to enable them to aspire, achieve and be successful.

This Sufficiency Strategy sets out our commissioning priorities for children in care and care experienced young adults, which will enable the council to deliver its ambitions and continue to meet its Sufficiency Duty which is a statutory requirement set out in Section 22G of the Children's Act 1989.

The strategy focuses upon understanding the needs of our children now and over the next 3 years, giving an understanding of the services that will be required to meet future need. The strategy will consider the best methods to meet the needs including the method of commissioning internal and external high-quality services. Our strategy will need to be able to adapt to the changing number of children who are in care, both increasing and decreasing, and be agile to respond quickly to any changing need.

Research has shown that there is no optimal number of children in care, and that social workers and their managers must make the best decisions based on available information and a robust assessment. Therefore, this strategy is the starting point for the future service provision required to meet Havering's changing requirements. Supporting our commitment to ensuring all children are nurtured to have the skills and attributes to grow into their full potential.



2. Vision

As stated in Havering we have given our commitment to our children and young people that we will create an environment where they are well, inspired, safe, heard, and treated fairly. We want children and young people to flourish, supported by a network of dedicated professional, families, carers and community partners.

We wish:

- **W** For children and young people to start **well** and stay **well**
- **I** For children to grow into individuals who will positively contribute to society and the communities in which they live, we want you to be inspired.
- **S** We will use our powers towards ensuring that children not only are **safe** but also feel **safe**.
- **H** For children to be **healthy** and well and **heard**.

3. Aims, objectives and outcomes

The information that follows in this document will help us to identify and focus the key commissioning activity we must undertake to deliver the priorities set out above.

Acting in our roles as corporate parents we will;

- Ensure children achieve permanency within a family at the earliest opportunity.
- Ensure more children in care live within the borough by;
 - Increasing the number of approved foster carers;
 - Developing commercial relationships with fostering, children's home providers and supported accommodation providers;
 - Creating new children's homes;

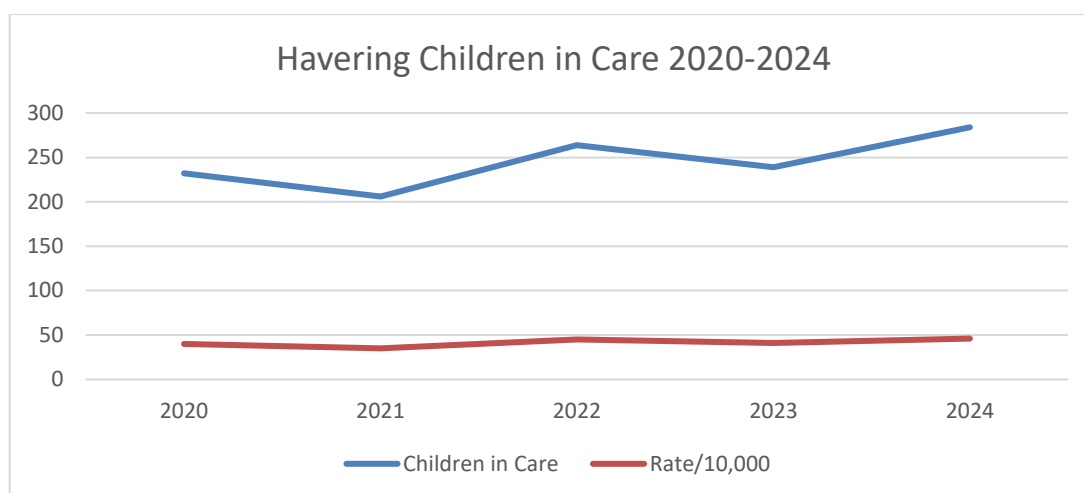
- Increasing after care accommodation pathways including Staying Put within foster carers, Staying Close near children's homes and their own housing options through supported tenancies.
- Ensure children have access to well-trained foster parents by;
 - Developing a robust recruitment and training offer for staff and foster carers;
 - Expanding and embedding a specialist emotional wellbeing support service, based upon trauma informed practice into fostering;
 - Ensuring foster carers receiving continuous professional development through enhanced supervision;
 - Embedding and developing the Mockingbird model across the council;
 - Contracting with care providers who share Havering's aspirations.
- Ensure children who have additional special and complex needs have the right services to meet their needs by;
 - Providing a sufficient range of short breaks;
 - Ensuring children's additional needs are fully understood by their carer's, who can support the child's development whilst in their care.
- Ensure children in care receive the support to reach their educational potential by
 - Enabling the Virtual School to engage with care providers to describe the additional support required to promote the importance of school attendance.
- Ensure that supported accommodation providers for 16 & 17-year-olds and care experienced young adults, are commissioned to provide ongoing support and guidance to enable a successful transition into adulthood.

4. Children in Care - The Local and National Context

Nationally the population of children has risen by 1.8%. However, Havering's population of children has risen significantly higher with an increase of 6% in the same period. Nationally there has been a rise in the number of children in care, with an increase of just under 5% from 80,000 in 2020 to 83,630 in 2024. In Havering we have seen a 22% rise of our children in care population. As a result the rate of children in care per 10,000 has risen by 11 per 10,000 in Havering, rising from 232 in 2020 to 284 in March 2024. On the 31st December 2024 there were 271 children in care within Havering.

Graph 1 below shows the population of children in care at the end of March 2024 and the rate per 10,000 population.

Graph 1 Havering's Children in Care Population

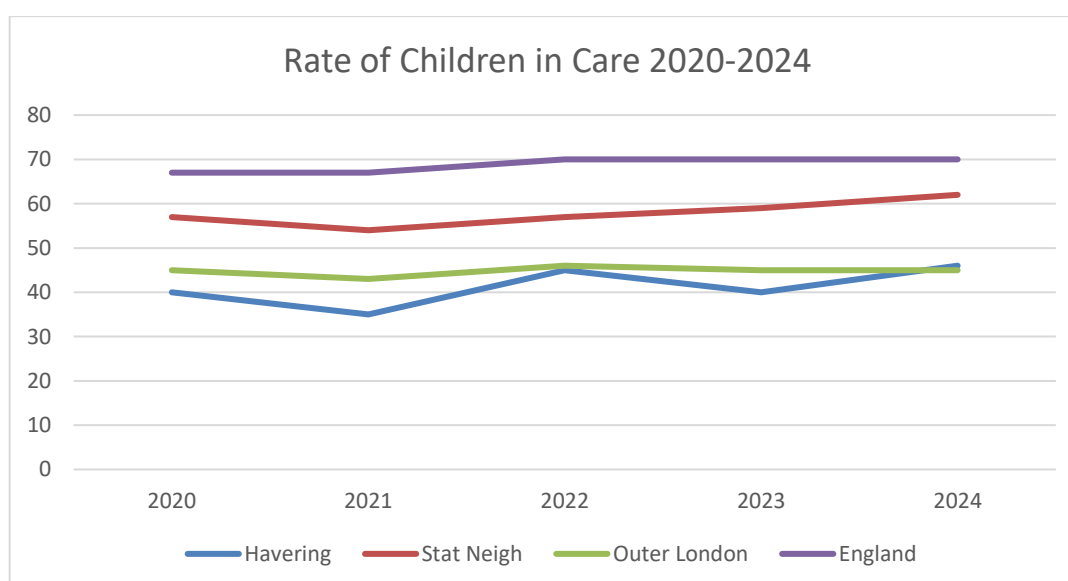


To understand Havering's current performance, it is important for us to measure and benchmark against other councils who are considered similar to us, such as our Department for Education nominated statistical neighbours. Havering's current statistical neighbours are Essex, Lancashire, Thurrock, Southend, Kent, Bexley, Medway, Swindon, West Northamptonshire and Bury.

Havering is also part of a cohort of Outer London local authorities of which there are 18 other London Boroughs that we can benchmark our performance against.

Graph 2 below shows the rate per 10,000 of children in care measuring Havering against our statistical neighbours, Outer London councils and England.

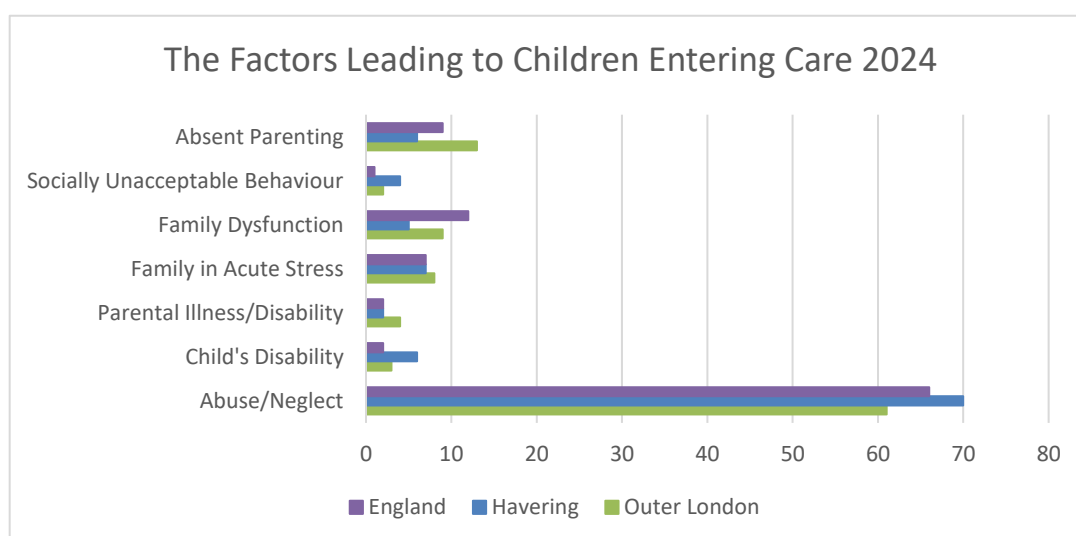
Graph 2 Benchmarking the Rate/10,000 Children in Care



Graph 2 shows that our rates of children in care remains lower than our statistical neighbours and there is currently a minimal difference between Havering and the other Outer London councils' performance. However, it is worth noting, that the Outer London population of children overall has reduced by 1% since 2020. Of the 19 councils in Outer London, Havering's population rise of 6% is double the next largest increase, with 10 of the 19 councils having had a children's population decrease.

It is important to understand why children come into care. There are multiple factors and reasons for this to happen including parental abuse through to child's disability or parent ill-health. Annual Government data relating to the causes of why children enter care has shown a consistent pattern over many years. The following table shows the relevant proportions benchmarking Havering against the national picture in March 2024;

Graph 3 Why are children in care?



Graph 3 above identifies the proportions of children who enter care and the primary reason for that happening. Compared to other councils Havering has a greater proportion of children entering care after experiencing harm or through their disability.

Wilkinson and Bowyer's (2017) literature review identified several parental vulnerabilities - which are often combined with poverty - that can have an adverse effect on parenting and can lead to children entering care.

These factors can include:

- parents' exposure to adverse childhood experiences often referred to as ACE's (e.g. parental domestic violence, substance misuse, mental health issues)
- domestic abuse, mental health difficulties, drug and alcohol misuse

- (combined or singly)
- a history of crime (especially for violence and sexual offences)
- patterns of multiple consecutive partners
- acrimonious separation
- parental learning disability
- intergenerational cycles of child maltreatment

4.1. Action 1:

Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO'S) need to understand the backgrounds of children in care and any trauma they may have experienced to inform assessment of need and reflect this within the child's support and care plans.

Supervising Social Workers need to be proactive in the support they offer their foster carers linked to the child's lived experience.

Commissioners need to be aware of the population increase of children in care, working closely with the fostering service and liaising with the care market to inform them of the council's developing needs.

5. Who are our children in care?

In order to provide the most suitable care provision and to develop effective support systems we need to understand who our individual children in care are, their ages, gender, race and religious backgrounds.

Table 1 shows the changing ages of children in care, who were in care on the 31st March 2023 and 2024.

Table 1 Ages of Havering's children in care

Age Range	2023		2024	
	Number	% of CIC Pop	Number	% of CIC Pop
0 to 4	42	18%	49	17%
5 to 9	37	15%	42	15%
10 to 15	81	34%	120	42%
16+	79	33%	73	26%

Between 2023 and 2024 the number of children aged between 10 and 15 years increased by 50%. All other age ranges remained stable.

Table 2, below, shows the ages of children who entered and left care during 2023 and 2024. The greatest number of children entering care were those aged between 10 and 15. This group also showed the biggest net gain, of 34 children in the year.

Most children leaving care were in the 16+ group were aged 18.

Table 2 Ages of children entering and leaving care

Age Range	0-4	5-10	11-15	16+	Total
Entered Care	32	24	53	35	144
Left Care	22	6	19	60	107
Difference	+10	+18	+34	-25	+37

It should be noted that whilst children leave care at 18, Havering is responsible for care leavers up to the age of 25 years including support with accommodation in some circumstances, in line with current leaving care legislation.

Over the past 5 years the gender of Havering's children in care has averaged 56% male and 44% female. However, in 2023/24 this showed a slight change for children entering care. Of the 144 children who entered care, 53% were male and 47% were female.

A further group of children in care are those who have specific disabilities. Havering has a dedicated Children with Disabilities social work service, and the vast majority of these children are cared for by their families, and receive additional support through children in need plans. However, there is a growing number of children with disabilities who are in care.

Table 3 below shows the number of children with disabilities who were in care between 2022 and 2024, profiling their ages and ethnicity.

Table 3 Children with Disabilities

Age Range	2022/23	2023/24
Under 5	1	1
Between 5 and 10	0	1
Between 10 and 16	8	9
16 & 17	7	9
Ethnicity	2022/23	2023/24
Asian/Asian British	3	4
Black/Caribbean/Black British	2	2
Mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds	2	3
White	9	11
Total	16	20

The ethnicity of children in our care has also fluctuated over time, with the main group being children from a White British descent, which accounted for 63% in 2024. Children from an Asian background have been consistent at 5%. However, there has been a gradual reduction of children from black backgrounds from 20% in 2019 to 11% in 2024. The ethnicity which has significantly grown as a proportion is children with mixed heritage, which rose from 8% in 2018 to 16% in 2024.

This information is important for the fostering service so they can target their recruitment strategy to provide foster carers to enable better matching with children's individual demographics. Over 74% of our foster carers are from a White British background.

Table 4 Ethnicity of Children in care

	Percentage of Care Population	Percentage Foster Care Population
Asian/Asian British	5%	6%
Black/Caribbean/Black British	11%	17%
Mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds	16%	3%
White	63%	74%
Other/Not Available	3%	0%

5.1. Action 2:

Recruitment of foster carers and age approvals needs to align with the ages of children entering care and their ethnicities.

Social workers and their managers need to understand the increasing demands for support from families with children aged between 10 and 15 years.

Commissioners need to be aware of the needs of all children entering care, especially the level of need for the 0-10 and the 10-15 age group.

Commissioners need to be aware of the additional needs of children with disabilities in creating specifications for their care requirements.

6. Where Children Live

On the 31st March 2024 Havering's children in care were living in a range of settings as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Homes where children live

Care Type	Number of Children	
Placed for Adoption	3	218 in family-based care (78%)
Fostering- Havering approved	82	
Fostering- Connected Person	62	
Fostering- IFA	61	
Placed with Parents	10	
Children's Homes	42	62 in group care or supported living (22%)
Supported Living	13	
Other	7	
Total	280	

The Council is committed to provide a range of high quality homes for children within Havering. On 31st March 2024 215 (76%) of Havering's children lived in Havering or within 20 miles of their home address. The 65 children who live further than 20 miles from their home address are placed further away as they have needed to access specialist services or their carers are family members, who live outside of the borough.

The proportion of children in care living with Havering based carers is shown below. Table 6 below shows the number of children in care and the proportion placed with carers who live within the borough.

Table 6 Proportion of Havering children living in in-borough provision

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Children living with Havering based Carers	119	112	116	102	131	123	122
Total In Care	251	247	232	206	264	239	280
Proportion living with Havering based carers	47%	45%	50%	49.5%	49.6%	51.5%	44%

The increase in the number of children in care during 2023/24 was primarily met by placing children outside of the borough.

As can be seen in Table 5 above, most of Havering's children in care (218), are living within a family setting. However, the number of children living in a children's home has, as a proportion of the children in care increased year on year since 2018 as shown in Table 7.

Table 7 Proportion of children living in a children's home

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Children living in children's homes	19	22	23	23	32	31	41
Total number of children in care	251	247	232	206	264	239	280
Proportion of children in care living in children's homes	7.6%	8.9%	9.9%	11.2%	11.4%	13.5%	14.6%

The Council has developed the Havering Access to Resources Panel (HARP). This panel is managed by the Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting and regularly reviews the need for children to live in residential care. The panel assists social workers, fostering services and brokerage officers to plan for the use of family-based care, when it is in the child's best interest to do so.

During 2023/24 there was an increase in the number of children with disabilities requiring residential education, and there were several children who required specialist care following concerns relating to exploitation and gang violence. These groups increased the proportion of children requiring care outside of the council boundaries.

6.1. Action 3:

Commissioners need to improve the commercial relationships with local IFAs and children's home providers, so children can remain living in the borough.

7. Stability of Children in Care

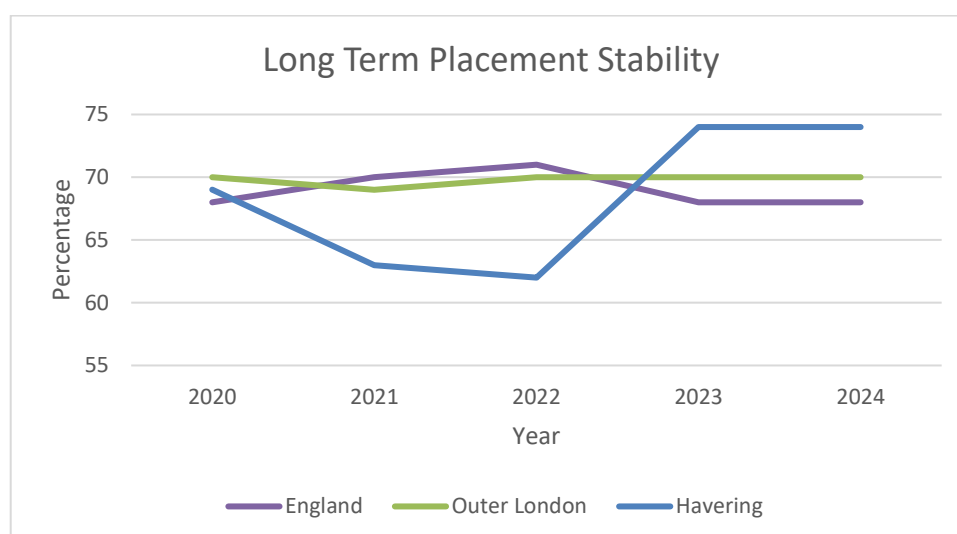
There are two measures of stability for children in care;

- Long-term stability- Children who have been in care for at least 2.5 years who have been in the same arrangement for at least 2 years, and
- Short-term stability- Children who have had 3 or more arrangements in the previous 12 months.

When measuring long-term stability, the bigger the number the more stable children are within their care arrangement.

Havering's performance when benchmarked against all England councils and outer London councils is shown in Graph 4. It shows an improving position from 2020, with Havering outperforming 12 of the 18 Outer London councils in 2024.

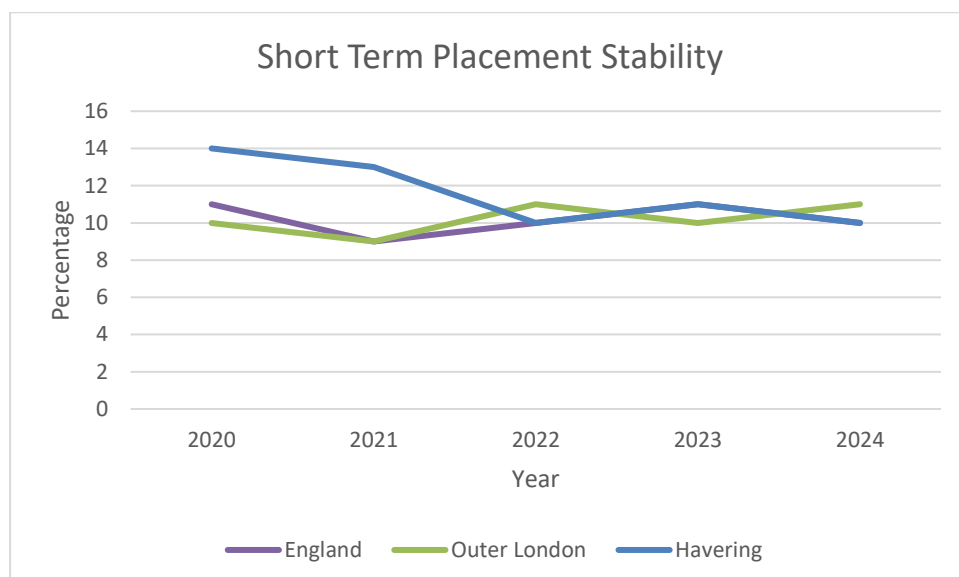
Graph 4 Long-term placement stability



Our review of performance of short-term stability also shows an improving pattern as set out in Graph 5 below. During early 2022 new protocols were put in place to only allow moves to be agreed by the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Havering's performance improved to be in line with the other outer London councils.

When measuring short-term stability, councils aim to have fewer children moving homes, so the lower the % the better the performance. During 2020 – 2021 our performance on short term stability was the worst in London. In 2024, only 6 of the 18 London Councils had better performance. The impact of the Havering Access to Resources Panel (HARP), ensuring senior management oversight has contributed to this improvement.

Graph 5 Short term placement stability



7.1. Action 4:
Social workers and IROs need to identify and support children and their carers at the earliest opportunity to ensure children do not move placement unnecessarily

8. Forecasting Future Demand

Understanding and forecasting placement demand for children in care is not an exact science. There are several complex variables which need to be considered. These factors include positive preventative services such as;

- receiving good parenting as a child,
- engagement in education,
- maintaining positive supportive networks as young people become adults,

- early help in the community when a person becomes a parent, and
- responsive statutory services when help is required.

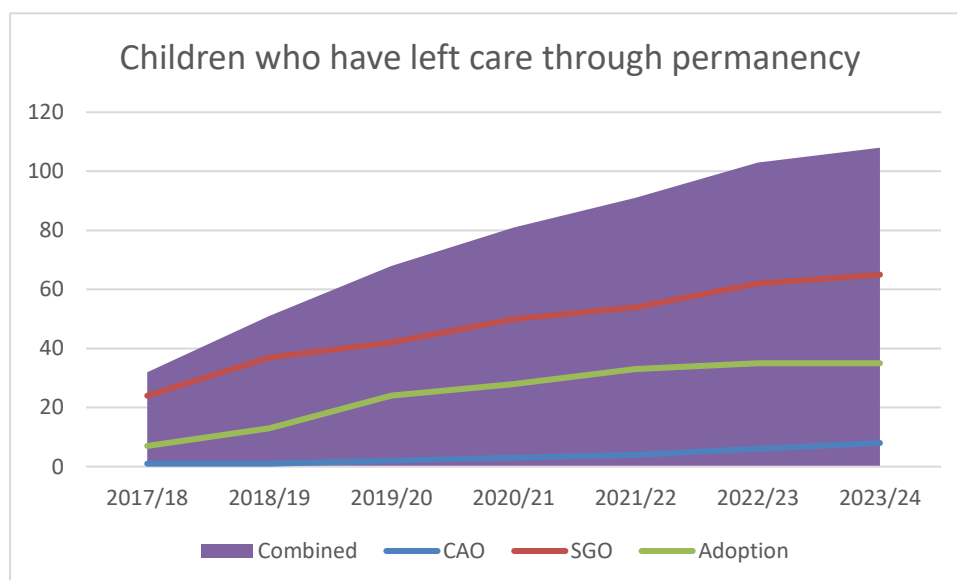
By ensuring the right services are in place we can mitigate risks linked to isolation, parental mental health, confidence, and skills etc. However, alongside these protective factors there are an equal number of risk factors that in some cases are difficult for children's services alone to mitigate against. These include severe mental health difficulties, drug misuse, learning disabilities and harmful behaviours and most significantly poverty which we know is increasing in our communities.

It has already been identified that Havering has seen a 6% rise in its children's population since 2020. It is expected that this growth will continue, through the urban expansion of Havering. An effect of this will be an increase in the number of children in care, because if the rate per 10,000 remains the same, any increase in population will lead to an increase in the number of children in care.

In Havering there has been a positive history of securing permanency for children in care through adoption and special guardianship orders.

The chart below shows the impact of this on the numbers of children who would otherwise have been in care. The accumulative effect of alternative orders has reduced the number of children in care. Over 100 children have left care since 2018 to live with permanent families.

Graph 6 Children who have secured permanence in families

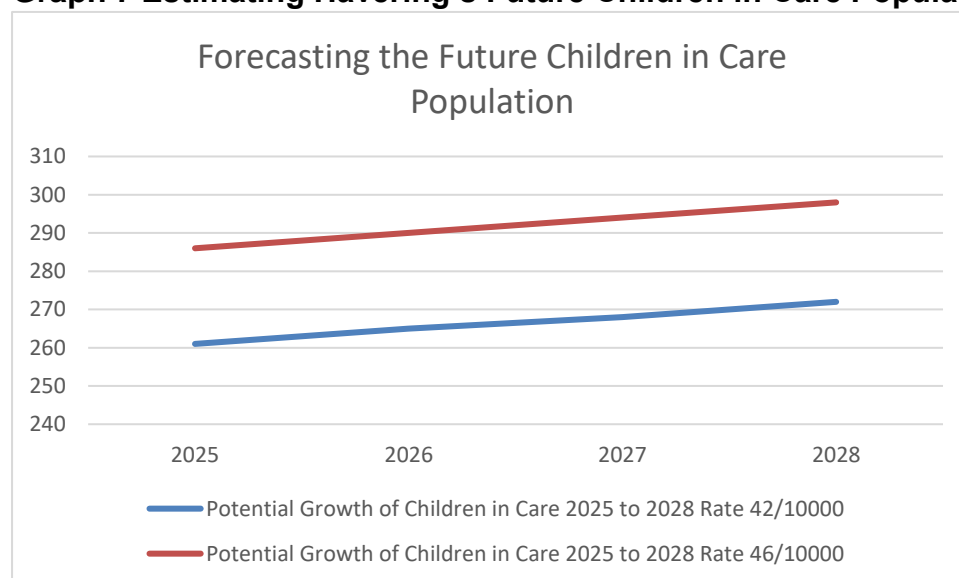


The numbers of children attaining permanence is not as high as we would want. In 2023/24 there were no children adopted from care, and only 5 children were subject to Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) or Child Arrangement Orders (CAO). This was the lowest number of permanency plans since 2018.

As reported earlier the care population has fluctuated over time, and it is likely

to fluctuate in the future. However, Havering has seen some consistency with an average rate of 42 per 10,000 of children in care over the past 4 years. The forecasts provided in Graph 7 below are based upon two potential scenarios. One is the linear population growth of 1.4% per year and an average rate of 42 children per 10,000 in care, which is the average rate over the past 4 years. The second is also a linear population growth but using the rate from 2024 of 46/10,000.

Graph 7 Estimating Havering's Future Children in Care Population



Graph 7 shows, that depending upon the two variables of population growth and the rate of children in care, there is a possibility that by March 2028 there could be 298 children in care in Havering.

Alongside local children entering care, all councils are required to provide homes for children who are unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASCs) under the national transfer scheme. In 2022 the Government raised the proportion of UASCs each council would be responsible for, to 0.1% of its children's population. For Havering by March 2028 this could be 65 asylum seeking children. As of December 2024, Havering was responsible for 24 asylum seeking children significantly lower than the government target.

As this is a new requirement the additional young people have not yet been factored into the growth forecast. However, it should be assumed that there will be an expected additional 41 asylum seeking children, and once the council reaches its expected number it should remain stable unless there is a growth in the population of children within the borough.

The next chapters describe the types of care required, which in turn will help us to take a view on provision that we will require in future years.

8.1. Action 5:

To review and further develop the existing permanency planning process to ensure that plans for children enable them to achieve their long-term goals within their individual timescales.

9. Type of homes children in care live in

Fostering

As at the 31st March 2024 the type of family-based carers and the number of Havering children they were caring for is set out in Table 8 below.

Table 8 Havering children in foster homes

Type of Foster Carer	No. of Carers	No. of Children Placed
Connected Person Foster Carer	30	36
Havering Approved Fostering Household	74	77
IFA Carer	35	49
Total	139	162

There is an annual national audit of fostering. Which details fostering provision across all councils and independent fostering agencies.

The audit enables analysis to be undertaken in terms of approved fostering households and the number of children living within these at the 31st March each year.

Table 9 below, shows the approved fostering household numbers for Outer London and the number children in care living in these families.

As can be seen the occupancy levels range between 40 and 69%, with the median of 57%. Havering's occupancy is 64%, which is the third highest in the region. However, it should be noted that even with this level of occupancy the recruited fostering offer in Havering only covers 28% of the total demand.

Table 9 Fostering in Outer London Councils March 2024

Council	No. of Council Approved Fostering Households	Max. Capacity of Children	No. of children placed	Proportion of capacity filled
Barking and Dagenham	130	290	180	62%
Barnet	75	115	75	65%

Bexley	80	165	95	58%
Bi-Borough	45	75	30	40%
Brent	65	95	60	63%
Bromley	80	135	75	56%
Croydon	125	245	170	69%
Ealing	70	120	65	54%
Enfield	105	200	120	60%
Greenwich	100	200	125	63%
Harrow	55	120	70	58%
Havering	75	125	80	64%
Hillingdon	50	90	45	50%
Hounslow	70	105	60	57%
Merton	55	105	55	52%
Redbridge	70	120	65	54%
Sutton	35	65	35	54%
Waltham Forest	75	125	65	52%

Therefore, Havering needs to purchase foster care for 61 children from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). These arrangements are currently necessary to meet the demand placed on our children's services to identify family-based care.

Analysis of the local independent fostering sector undertaken in July 2023 shows that 16 IFAs have a presence within the borough. There are 49 IFA fostering households. These families are approved to look after a maximum of 97 children. Havering had 16 children living with these carers, therefore, the council is utilising only 16.5% of the available local IFA capacity.

The combined total of approved foster carers both in-house and IFAs in Havering is 124.

During 2023/24 Havering's fostering service recruited and approved 6 new fostering households, this was from a total of 103 fostering enquiries. In response to this the service created an updated recruitment strategy during 2024.

Havering is part of a regional fostering hub supported by the Department for Education (DfE), with five other NE London councils. The key role of the Hub is to increase awareness of fostering across the region which will increase the number of enquiries. Havering's 103 enquiries show the public has little knowledge of the council's needs; however, a 6% conversion rate (enquiries leading to approval) is

good and better than most agencies. The Hub will be undertaking the marketing and awareness raising roles, which in turn should increase the number of enquiries.

Havering also opened its first Mockingbird¹ Constellation supported by the DfE during 2024. Over the next year this will be embedded into the service and evaluated to measure the outcomes. If the evaluation is positive there is an ambition to increase the number of constellations.

As identified above, the number of children attaining permanence dropped in 2024. The fostering service has amended the Special Guardianship Policy and included improvements to post order support reviewing the financial package, which ensures previous foster carers receive no reduction in their fostering allowance, which continues to be paid after the SGO has been awarded.

9.1. Action 6:
Develop a local IFA framework so more children can be placed within the borough, or within 20 miles.

Evaluate the effectiveness of the Mockingbird project.

Evaluate the effectiveness of the local recruitment hub in increasing the number of fostering enquiries.

Maintaining a foster carer recruitment conversion rate of at least 6%, from enquiry to approval.

Explore joining the Newham council Dynamic purchasing system for all care types

Children's Homes

Havering council currently does not operate any children's homes. The North-East London Commissioning Partnership (NELCP) is a strategic partnership between seven London boroughs and two independent children's homes providers.

Havering is the lead council for the North East London residential project. The NELCP commissioned Woodfords Children's Services to deliver therapeutic children's homes service within the NE London region. The project currently offers 19 beds to the 6 NEL councils. Havering is the main user of the project and usually has between 6 and 7 children placed in the homes.

There are 13 private children's homes operating in Havering, offering a maximum of 55 children a home. These 13 homes are operated by 11 different companies. 5 of these homes are for children with disabilities, and they offer short breaks and longer stays.

¹ [Mockingbird: A new way to foster | The Fostering Network](#)

At the 31st December 2024 Havering had 4 children placed in these homes. Havering's use of children's homes is shown in Table 6 above, but to summarise there were two years, 2021/22 and 2023/24 when there was a greater need for these services. Between 2020/21 and 2021/22 there was a 50% increase in use, and in 2023/24 there was a 33% increase from the previous year.

Children with complex disabilities, who require homes with care and education account for 25% of the children living in children's homes.

The remaining 75%, 34 children, primarily require services for children who have experienced traumatic early care. This means that the children's homes need to be able to support children with dysregulated emotions, attachment disorders and self-harming behaviours, either through overdosing, cutting, head-banging or threats to jump off buildings or bridges. Self-harming behaviours are also seen in dangerous decision making linked to inappropriate relationships with peers or older adults.

There is a growing group of children who have been subjected to exploitation from an early age, primarily before being known to the council. These young people then come to the attention of the council because of a crisis, either at home or through the criminal justice system. The risk assessments for these young people may require the use of services in rural communities, at distance from the borough. Where possible we also need to commission specialist mentoring services to enable the young person to develop insight into their lifestyle.

There is another, smaller group of young people who have required specialist care following discharge from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Tier 4 hospitals. This group of young people have mainly been aged over 16 and have had significant CAMHS interventions over many years, and they will require services for a number of years more. There is no local provision for this group, and they have needed to be placed in Suffolk, Essex, and Kent. These areas have differently commissioned CAMHS services, which without good S117² aftercare planning can lead to a breakdown of their clinical support.

9.2. Action 7:

The council needs to develop commercial relationships with local children's home providers to create local capacity through creating a local care framework.

The council will develop its own children's home provision. This will be focused upon children who are being discharged from CAMHS Tier 4 hospitals, but will also provide an alternative pathway, which prevents admission to hospital.

The council will develop its own children's home for children with disabilities to provide both longer term and short break care options.

² [Mental health aftercare if you have been sectioned - Social care and support guide - NHS](#)

Use the capacity of the NELCP commissioner, to undertake a NEL wide needs analysis to identify areas for joint commissioning, such as a regional crisis service closer to London.

Supported Accommodation

As the young people growing up within our care get older, the focus of the care and support given by carers is to enable our young people to be prepared to move into more independent living in our communities. For most of our young people this will take place in their fostering and/or family living settings. Where appropriate, our social work and fostering team will work to support young people remain within their fostering family setting through a Staying-Put arrangements.

For a small number of our young people, they will leave their children's home or fostering arrangement after they are 16 and will live within supported accommodation. We currently support this through commissioning supported accommodation from the independent sector.

The council has a block contract with Centrepont, who provides 6 supported accommodation flats. All additional provision is spot purchased. The council uses in the region of 24 supported accommodation flats each year, and these are provided by 7 companies. They are all in Havering or neighbouring boroughs. Each young person has a support plan which is tailored to meet their needs, and ranges between 5 and 15 hours per week. The council also requires an adult to be in the premises overnight.

Following the introduction of the new Supported Accommodation Regulations in November 2023, the council has become aware of the true local capacity of supported accommodation. Within Havering, currently there are 38 OFSTED registered supported accommodation addresses, with a total capacity of 145 placements. Of these, 11 offer single occupancy accommodation, and 27 offer shared living, ranging between 2 and 15 young people a home.

The significance of this number of providers, their capacity and the need of Havering is that there are a substantial number of 16 and 17-year-olds from other councils living in support services, where care is not provided.

As young people reach the age of 18 and leave care they require several types of accommodation. Some young people will remain with their foster carers in a Staying Put provision. Some young people will move to university accommodation, as part of their further education. Some young people will return to their families. However, others will look to live independently in their own accommodation. The council currently has two contracts for semi-independent accommodation and is developing several further accommodation projects which will come online in 2025 and 2027, offering 27 additional flats.

**9.3. Action 8:
Create a Havering based Supported Accommodation framework.**

Work closely with the Live Well Supported Housing commissioners and Leaving Care team to ensure sufficient accommodation is built to meet needs and is available for Havering young people.

10. Services for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Most children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities can have their needs met through local mainstream education and universal services. However, some children and their families need additional assistance. Havering has published its Local Offer³ for children and young people up to the age of 25, in line with the SEND Code of Practice 2014.

Universal services include children's centres, nurseries, play services, after school clubs, sports and leisure and youth services.

However, when children and their families require more support Havering has created a range of short breaks provision, which enable children to have fun and develop independence, and provide their families with an opportunity to have a break from caring and spend more time with other family members.

To be eligible for a short break the child needs to be aged under 18, be a resident of Havering and have a diagnosed disability or impairment that would define them as a disabled person under the Equality Act 2010 including a physical or sensory impairment, learning disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, challenging behaviour as a result of a disability, complex health needs and those with palliative, life-limiting or life threatening conditions.

During 2023/24, 865 children received short break support. Of these 411 received a Direct Payment, 187 children participated in Family Information Group supports (FIG)⁴, which is a weekend and holiday short break scheme, and 28 children accessed a total of 937 nights of overnight short breaks. Some of the overnight short breaks takes place within the family home, with carers providing overnight support. A small number of children receive overnight support outside of the family home.

11. Commercial Relationships with Care Providers

During 2024/25 the council purchased care for 139 children from 61 different companies. Table 10 below shows the number of providers by care type.

³ [Local Offer | Havering Directory](#)

⁴ [FIG Playscheme | familyinformationgroup.co.uk](#)

Table 10 Children in Care and Providers

Care Type	Number of Children	Number of Companies
IFAs	81	24
Children's Homes	34	27
Supported Accommodation	24	10
Total	139	61

Apart from the block contracts with Woodfords and Centrepont, currently the council has no meaningful commercial relationship with any individual provider. For instance, during the current financial year there were three IFAs who we placed 39% of our children with and there were a further 21 companies who met the additional 61% of our need. The maximum spend with one provider is £418k annually out of a total spend of £2.7m.

Havering places more children with Woodfords Children's Services through the block contract than other individual residential provider, with an annual spend of approximately £1.5m.

For the remaining children there is a similar picture for children's homes as there is with fostering. There is one provider who we spend £2.2m with annually and 25 others that we spend an additional £9m which is an average of £360k per provider. As identified in Sections 7 and 8, there is significant provision within the borough, which is not used by the council. This means that Havering's children are required to live outside of their home area and access services provided by others. It also means that Havering is home to a significant number of children in care placed by other councils.

On March 31st, 2024, there were 235 children from other councils living in Havering, at the same time we needed to place 158 children in other council areas. There is sufficient care provision within Havering to reduce the need to place children further away if we create commercial relationships with these providers.

11.1. Action 9:
Create strategic partnerships with local care providers.

Increase the number of children who are living in homes in Havering by creating commercial relationships with local providers.

Host regular Provider Events so the council can describe to the market the needs of children and young people.

12. Expenditure and Unit Cost of Care

The council is responsible for the care of over 400 children per year, and they live in a variety of internal and externally provided homes. Table 11 shows the expenditure by care type over the past three years.

Table 11 The Cost of Care

Care Type	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Havering Foster Carers	£2,198,514	£2,758,476	£2,252,054
Connected Carers	£717,400	£897,815	£1,024,046
IFAs	£2,594,982	£2,937,054	£2,900,552
Private Children's Homes	£6,730,292	£7,215,991	£11,695,514
Supported Accommodation	£2,066,418	£2,324,657	£1,788,685
Total Spend	£14,307,606	£16,133,993	£19,660,851

To understand the expenditure, it is important to understand the actual number of services we have purchased. Table 12 shows the number of bed nights which were used in 2023/24 and the associated unit cost.

Table 12 Bed Night and Unit Cost Data

Care Type	Bed Nights Used	Total Cost	Unit Cost/Week
Havering Foster Carers	28,482	£2,252,054	£553.49
Connected Carers	19,375	£1,024,046	£369.98
IFAs	18,337	£2,900,552	£1,107.26
Private Children's	12,541	£11,695,514	£6,528.08

13. Measures of performance – Action Plan

With the current demand pressures and complexities mentioned, to meet the demand for Havering's children there are a number of strands of work we need to observe, action, and bring together. These can be highlighted throughout this strategy and forms the basis for the following action plan.

Sufficiency Strategy Action Plan

Action Plan Number	Action	What will it deliver	Who is responsible	Comp Date
Action 1	Social Workers, IROs and Foster Carers need to understand the backgrounds of children in care and any trauma they may have experienced to inform assessment of need and reflect this within the child's support plans.	Everyone better understands the needs of children and there are fewer placement breakdowns	Social Care Academy	April 2026
	Supervising Social Workers need to be proactive in the support they offer their foster carers linked to the child's lived experience.	Foster carers feel that they are better supported and have the skills to look after children and young people with complex needs.	AD Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting	April 2026
	Commissioners need to be aware of the population increase of children in care, working closely with the fostering service and liaising with the care market to inform them of the council's developing needs.	Children are placed with foster carers who understand their needs.	Commissioning /Brokerage Service	April 2026
Action 2	Foster Carer recruitment is undertaken recognising the ages of children in care and their global majority backgrounds	More children can live with families with similar ethnic backgrounds and children can remain within the borough in matched placements	Fostering Recruitment Manager	Monitored annually
	Social workers and their managers need to understand the increasing demands for support from families with children aged between 10 and 15 years.	Children can remain in their birth families rather than entering care.	AD Early Help & Partnerships	Monitored monthly
	Commissioners need to be aware of the needs of all children entering care, especially the level of need for the 0-10 and the 10-15 age group.	Services are commissioned in a timely manner to ensure children and their families receive support at the right time	AD Early Help & Partnerships/Commissioning	Monitored Quarterly

	Commissioners need to be aware of the additional needs of children with disabilities in creating specifications for their care requirements.	Children have access to services that meet their needs	AD Early Help & Partnerships/AD Safeguarding & Corporate Parenting/Commissioning	Monitored Quarterly
Action 3	Commissioners need to improve the commercial relationships with local IFAs and children's home providers.	Care providers need to understand Havering's needs so children can remain living in the borough	Commissioning	June 2025
Action 4	Social workers and IROs need to identify and support children and their carers at the earliest opportunity to ensure children do not move placement unnecessarily	Earlier identification of children's presenting issues will enable the team around the family to align their interventions to support the child and carer better	AD Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting /Commissioning	June 2025
Action 5	To review and further develop the existing permanency planning process to ensure that plans for children enable them to achieve their long-term goals within their individual timescales.	Children leave care through long term arrangements such as adoption or SGO	AD Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting	Monthly
Action 6	Develop a local IFA framework	This will enable more children to live in the borough, or within 20 miles of their home.	Commissioning	June 2025
	Evaluate the effectiveness of the Mockingbird project.	To ensure foster carers feel well supported	AD Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting	Sept 2025
	Evaluate the effectiveness of the local recruitment hub in increasing the number of fostering enquiries.	To ensure more people make enquiries to foster in Havering	AD Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting	Sept 2025
	Maintaining a foster carer recruitment conversion rate of at least 6%, from enquiry to approval.	As the number of enquiries increase maintaining the conversion rate will lead to a growth of internal fostering families	AD Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting	Sept 2025
	Explore joining the Newham council Dynamic purchasing system for all care types	To have contractual access to approved IFAs and children's homes.	Commissioning	Sept 2025
Action 7	The council needs to develop commercial relationships with local children's home providers to create local capacity through creating a local care framework.	Care providers need to understand Havering's needs so children can remain living in the borough	Commissioning	April 2026

	The council will develop its own children's home provision. This will be focused upon children who are being discharged from CAMHS Tier 4 hospitals, but will also provide an alternative pathway, which prevents admission to hospital.	To create a local pathway for children being discharged from CAMHS Tier 4	Commissioning/ Head of Service for Corporate Parenting	April 2026
	The council will develop its own children's home for children with disabilities to provide both longer term and short break care options.	To provide high quality residential short breaks in Havering	Commissioning/ Children with Disability service	April 2027
	Use the capacity of the NELCP commissioner, to undertake a NEL wide needs analysis to identify areas for joint commissioning, such as a regional crisis service closer to London.	To jointly commission care services which are required by more than 1 NEL council	Commissioning	Ongoing
Action 8	Create a Havering based Supported Accommodation framework.	To ensure Havering based supported accommodation providers are of high quality	Commissioning	April 2026
	Work closely with the Live Well Supported Housing commissioners and Leaving Care team to ensure sufficient accommodation is built to meet needs and is available for Havering young people.	To ensure we have high quality accommodation and effective support plans to enable young people to have their own tenancy	Commissioning and leaving care team/ Head of Service for Corporate Parenting	review annually
Action 9	Create strategic partnerships with local care providers.	Care providers need to understand Havering's needs so children can remain living in the borough	Commissioning	Sept 2025
	Improve commercial relationships with local providers.	Increase the number of children who are living in homes in Havering	Commissioning	Sept 2025
	Host regular Provider Events	The council can describe to the market the needs of children and young people.	Commissioning/ Brokerage	Sept 2025

Consultation

As part of the development of this strategy, the draft has been shared for comments with Children and young people who are part of the Children in Care Council 'Say it Louder' group, the Youth council and the Youth Management Committee of the Cocoon. . All Starting Well staff.

The Assistant Director for Education and the Virtual School Head teacher.

The Integrated Commissioning team

ICB and health providers.

Authorisation and communication

This Strategy will go through Havering's Governance procedures to be agreed by the Council's Cabinet and will be published.

Implementation and monitoring

The strategy action plan will be reviewed six-monthly in the Corporate Parenting Panel and within the Practice Improvement Board (PIB).

Monitoring actions and performance

The following areas will be monitored on a monthly basis;

- Number and Rate of children in care
- The proportion of children living with Havering foster carers, including connected carers
- Permanency planning
- Children placed further than 20 miles from Havering
- The stability of children's care provision
- The number of children living in all care types, including the proportion living in children's homes and supported accommodation
- The number of young care leavers living in semi-independent accommodation
- Analysis of unit costs for all care types

Evaluation and review

The strategy will be reviewed annually.

Children living in high costs placements will be reviewed quarterly.

Further information

Further information can be obtained from the Integrated Team at Place.

Appendix 1: Equality Analysis (to be inserted)