



CABINET

Subject Heading:

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025 - 2028

Cabinet Member:

Councillor Oscar Ford, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

ELT Lead:

Tara Geere, Director of Starting Well

Report Author and contact details:

Jannine Layhe, Head of Service for Corporate Parenting, 01708432908, Jannine.Layhe@havering.gov.uk

Policy context:

The Corporate Parenting Strategy operates within legislation, ensuring local authorities act as responsible "parents" for children in care and care experienced young people. This involves providing high quality services and support to achieve positive outcomes, similar to parental care. This responsibility is outlined within the Children Act 1989, where "corporate parenting" is a key principle.

Financial summary:

Some proposed actions may require investment to be fulfilled, without which there may be no improvement in outcomes and statutory obligations may not be met, however these will be met within existing resources.

Is this a Key Decision?

(c) Significant effect on two or more Wards

When should this matter be reviewed?

The Corporate Parenting Panel will monitor the strategy and a review of the strategy should take place from late 2027.

Reviewing OSSC:

People OSSC

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objective

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well

SUMMARY

Havering's draft Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025–2028 sets out our renewed commitment to ensuring that children in care and care experienced young people are supported to thrive. The strategy is guided by the borough's WISH principles, ensuring every child is Well, Inspired, Safe, Heard, and Treated Fairly and is aligned with the [Havering Vision](#) and the [Integrated Starting Well Plan](#).

The strategy proposes a coordinated, borough wide approach to corporate parenting, where professionals across services act collectively as responsible parents. It outlines key actions across health, education, participation, and safeguarding.

The strategy will be overseen by the Corporate Parenting Panel, which includes the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and other stakeholders. This panel will monitor progress, ensure accountability, and incorporate feedback from children in care and care experienced young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

- Approve the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025–2028 attached at Appendix One.
- Note that the Corporate Parenting Panel will monitor the delivery of the strategy and associated action plan, which will include scrutinising that there is:
 - Timely access to health and mental health services.
 - Strengthened education, employment, and mentoring pathways.
 - Strengthened housing pathways.

- Safer placements and community environments.
 - Meaningful participation of young people in shaping services.
 - Promotion of fairness, inclusion, and cultural celebration.
- Note that the Corporate Parenting Panel will monitor progress through key performance indicators and qualitative feedback, with updates to be shared with stakeholders, including children and young people, by officers in the Starting Well directorate.
- Direct officers to carry out an internal review of the strategy for late 2027, and to make any interim revisions to the action plan as needed to ensure continued relevance and impact.

REPORT DETAIL

1. The Corporate Parenting Strategy attached as Appendix One outlines Havering's vision for children in care and care experienced young people to be Well, Inspired, Safe, Heard and Treated Fairly. Our goal is to ensure that every Havering child and young person, including those in care or who have been in care, gets the support they need.
2. The strategy emphasises listening to the voices of children in care or who are care experienced, celebrating their successes, and ensuring they feel safe and proud.
3. This strategy was co-produced with the Children in Care Council and the Youth Management Group, ensuring that the voices of children in care and care experienced young people are at the heart.
4. Through focus/feedback sessions with children in care and care experienced young people, it became clear that key performance indicators (KPIs) linked to the strategy and action plan should be developed as separate, supporting documents which are to be monitored by the Corporate Parenting Panel. The strategy was intentionally produced to be concise, accessible, and child friendly, ensuring that its core messages are easily understood and resonate with those it aims to support. By taking this approach, the strategy champions clarity and inclusion, putting the voices and needs of children and young people at its heart.
5. The strategy outlines five key promises which align to the priorities in the Council's Integrated Starting Well Plan; Happy Healthy Lives. These are:
 1. **Well** – We will help you stay healthy, support your mental wellbeing, and make sure your health needs are met.
 2. **Inspired** – We will cheer you on and support your education and ambitions, help you plan for your future, and give you chances to try new things.
 3. **Safe** – We aspire to work with others to keep you safe at home, in education, and in your community.

4. **Heard** – Your voice matters. We will listen, involve you in decisions, and support you to speak up.
5. **Treated Fairly** – We will celebrate who you are, make sure everyone is treated with respect and kindness, and challenge any discrimination..
6. Consultation on the draft Corporate Parenting Strategy was undertaken between 14 July and 12 September 2025, via the Council's digital consultation platform, Citizen Space. The consultation was shared widely with partners via the Corporate Parenting Panel, as well as with children in care and care experienced young people.
7. A total of 21 responses to the survey were received. Almost half (48%) of responses were from those who work with or support children and young people.
8. Promise 1: The majority (90%) of respondents agreed that *"We'll help you stay healthy, support your mental wellbeing, and make sure your health needs are met"* should be a priority. 43% felt it was clear what actions the Council and professionals will take to support children and young people in care and those with care experience.
9. Promise 2: The majority (90%) of respondents agreed that *"We'll cheer you on at school, help you plan for your future, and give you chances to try new things"* should be a priority. 43% felt it was clear what actions the Council and professionals will take to support children and young people in care and those with care experience.
10. Promise 3: The majority (90%) of respondents agreed that *"We'll work with others to keep you safe at home, in school, and in your community"* should be a priority. 48% felt it was clear what actions the Council and professionals will take to support children and young people in care and those with care experience.
11. Promise 4: All respondents (100%) agreed that *"We'll ensure your voice matters. We'll listen, involve you in decisions, and support you to speak up"* should be a priority. 52% felt it was clear what actions the Council and professionals will take to support children and young people in care and those with care experience.
12. Promise 5: The majority (86%) of respondents agreed that *"We'll celebrate who you are and make sure everyone is treated with respect and kindness"* should be a priority. 48% felt it was clear what actions the Council and professionals will take to support children and young people in care and those with care experience.
13. Overall, the consultation responses suggest that the priorities and promises outlined within the strategy are the right ones; however, clarity around the action being taken by the Council and professionals was felt to be lower and some respondents reported that it was difficult to know

how the priorities would be delivered without an underpinning action plan being made available alongside the strategy.

14. As noted, the decision for the strategy to be concise and accessible was a deliberate one but considering this feedback, it will be important that the associated action plan, with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timed) objectives, and progress in delivering against these, is published at least annually to promote accountability.
15. Additionally, any actions that come from the consultation feedback will be looked at by the Corporate Parenting sub groups as part of their workplans.
16. Other themes within the consultation responses included:
 - a. **Barriers to accessing support** - Respondents highlighted barriers to accessing services, including: long waiting lists for mental health support impacting children's education and long-term prospects, inadequate or unsuitable housing for vulnerable young people, lack of affordable activities for children and young people after school and in holidays and insufficient support for carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities.
 - b. **Resource constraints and systemic issues** – Some of those responding in a professional capacity noted they are overstretched and expressed concern that high caseloads, staff turnover, lack of training, and time constraints can hinder follow-through on promised actions. Some respondents noted that schools are increasingly seen as hubs for emotional and practical support, taking time away from education.
 - c. **Communication and engagement** – Some respondents noted poor communication between the council, schools, social care, and families, including a lack of responsiveness to complaints or queries, and highlighted the need for meaningful engagement with children, young people, and families in decision-making processes.
 - d. **Equity, inclusion and safety** - Some respondents raised concerns about the treatment of children from ethnic minority groups, the safety of children in the community, and the adequacy of support for home-schooled, NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), and persistently absent children, highlighting the desire for a more connected system centred on the child's needs.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

None arising from this report

Appendices:

Appendix One – Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025 - 2028 Final

Appendix Two – Equalities and Health Impact Assessment

Appendix Three – Consultation comments

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.