

Corporate Parenting Committee

Wednesday 22 October 2025

2.00 pm

Ground floor meeting rooms GO2B and C, 160 Tooley Street,
SE1 2QH

Membership

Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Mohamed Deen
Councillor Natasha Ennin
Councillor Emily Hickson
Councillor Sarah King
Councillor Maria Linforth-Hall
Councillor Charlie Smith

Reserves

Councillor Sunil Chopra
Councillor Sabina Emmanuel
Councillor Sunny Lambe
Councillor Bethan Roberts
Councillor Kath Whittam
Councillor Irina Von Wiese

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Access to information

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Contact

Paula Thornton on 020 7525 4395 or email: paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk
or beverley.olamijulo@southwark.gov.uk

Members of the committee are summoned to attend this meeting

Althea Loderick

Chief Executive

Date: 14 October 2025



Corporate Parenting Committee

Wednesday 22 October 2025

2.00 pm

Ground floor meeting rooms GO2B and C, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Order of Business

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MOBILE PHONES

Mobile phones should be turned off or put on silent during the course of the meeting.

PART A - OPEN BUSINESS

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

A representative of each political group will confirm the voting members of the committee.

3. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

In special circumstances, an item of business may be added to an agenda within five clear days of the meeting.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Members to declare any interests and dispensation in respect of any item of business to be considered at this meeting.

5. MINUTES

1 - 8

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2025.

Item No.	Title	Page No.
6.	ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR FOR THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE 2025-26 (2.10PM - 2.15PM)	
	To appoint vice chair of the Corporate Parenting Committee for 2025-26.	
	(Deferred from the previous meeting).	
7.	SPEAKERBOX VERBAL UPDATE AND REPORT BACK ON ACTIONS (2.15PM - 2.45PM)	
8.	ANNUAL VIRTUAL HEADTEACHER'S REPORT 2024-2025 (2.45PM - 3.25PM)	9 - 59
9.	FOSTER ANNUAL REPORT (REPORT TO FOLLOW) (3.25PM - 3.55PM)	
10.	CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY UPDATE 2026 - 2030 UPDATE (3.55PM - 4.05PM)	60 - 64
11.	CORPORATE PARENTING SUBSTANCE MISUSE REPORT (4.05PM - 4.25PM)	65 - 70
12.	EMPLOYABILITY PATHWAY UPDATE (4.25PM - 4.35PM)	71 - 76
13.	CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE - WORKPLAN (4.35PM - 4.45PM)	77 - 80

ANY OTHER OPEN BUSINESS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF THE MEETING AND ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR AS URGENT.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The following motion should be moved, seconded and approved if the sub-committee wishes to exclude the press and public to deal with reports revealing exempt information:

“That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1-7, Access to Information Procedure rules of the Constitution.”



Corporate Parenting Committee

MINUTES of Corporate Parenting Committee held on Wednesday 16 July 2025 at 2.00 pm at Ground floor meeting rooms GO2B and C, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Natasha Ennin
Councillor Emily Hickson
Councillor Charlie Smith

**OTHER
MEMBERS
PRESENT:** Dr Mark Kerr (subject matter expert)

**OFFICER
SUPPORT:** Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Care
Elaine Reid, Head of Service: Permanence and Resources
Michael Crowe, Assistant Director, Transformation and Operations in Children's Services
Dr Stacy John-Legere, Designated doctor for Looked After Children, Southwark
Dr Jenny Taylor, Head of Clinical Service
Joy Edwards, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children
Sarah O'Connor, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children
Danny Edwards, Head of Economy
Rachel Massey, Community Consultant
Joy Hopkinson, Head of Safeguarding & Community Services, Governance and Assurance (legal)
Ekta Gupta, Children Rights and Participation
Dechaun Malcolm, Children Rights and Participation
Paula Thornton, Constitutional Officer
Beverley Olamijulo, Constitutional Officer (clerk)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mohammed Deen, Maria Linforth-Hall and Sarah King.

Apologies for absence was also received from Alasdair Smith.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

The members listed as present were confirmed as the voting members for the meeting.

3. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

The chair agreed to accept the following item set out in the supplemental agenda as late and urgent. The reasons for urgency and lateness were contained within the report:

- Item 10. Southwark homes for Southwark Children – short report.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

None were disclosed.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

6. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR FOR THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE 2025-26

Following discussions after the meeting it was noted the election of the Vice-Chair for the year 2025-26 should be deferred until the next meeting in October.

It was noted that a representative from Speaker box would be nominated as co. vice-chair for 2025-26.

7. SPEAKERBOX: PRESENTATION /DISCUSSION ON EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Representatives from Speaker Box introduced themselves to the meeting.

They presented a video about an organised residential trip to a farm with young people (under 13s) from Speaker box. They shared their experiences; some of

them were apprehensive about going on the trip but eventually decided to go and thoroughly enjoyed their time at the farm.

The purpose of the residential trip was to raise awareness, build confidence, and team working which would not have been possible without the support of the virtual school.

Summary of the presentation:

- Outlined information about the current levels of engagement
- Spoke about models of participation – voice not being heard even after completed surveys
- Share ideas – greater participation and being more involved
- Strategy – have a voice, engage, enable and deliver
- Our pillars – focused on how to best to tackle these topics
 - Education and employment
 - Standards and treatment in care
 - Apprenticeships, training, help with mental health and wellbeing
 - Growth in school – not to think it is a chore
 - More emphasis on school life and
 - School should be consistent for young people
 - Continued work on a project called “mental ships” – in conjunction with the virtual school
 - Standards and treatment in care
 - Suitable, stable, quality homes – long term matching with fewer matches.

Main priorities:

Six areas identified that would be focussed on:

- Key areas – reduced placements/moves
- Improved quality of care and informed support
- Improved trauma – informed support.

Young people spoke about care leavers' experiences of moving outside an area that they were not familiar with or particularly happy about.

Dr Mark Kerr spoke about the issue of commissioning and the chair made reference to the proposed children's homes in the borough.

Councillor Batteson, cabinet member for Climate Emergency, Jobs and Business stated:

- That it would be helpful to hear the views of the young people in regard to employment and training for them to secure job opportunities
- Joined up services to ensure that this was done efficiently
- Trailblazers programme that was specifically for care leavers
- He agreed to speak separately about outcomes of meeting, relating to

employment and training

- Local authorities provide their views on job opportunities for young people to central government, to get a broader view on the issues
- Young people asked about training and education and whether there would be enough resources to address this
- According to data there is a 75% success rate with young people that had received employment opportunities.

Note: Cllr Batteson agreed to attend a future committee meeting.

8. CARE LEAVERS EMPLOYABILITY PATHWAY

Michael Crowe, assistant director – Transformation and Operations in Children's Services presented:

The Children Act 1989 (the Act) as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 the council has a range of duties and responsibilities for care leavers aged 16 to 21, that include:

- Assistant to access and sustain in education, training and employment with that support continuing through to 25 if the young person is engaged in education and training throughout.

Summary of presentation:

- Addressed whether the council could do more for care leavers' employment in order to maximise expectation
- Ensure that young people are better prepared for employment
- Referred to leadership network and the opportunities available in that area
- Local authorities **supporting** care leavers – Camden borough leading on this
- Noting the challenges; providing collective learning and support
- Reference to the allocated funding for learning and support
- Budget capacity in the virtual school and for personal advisers – to ensure there is adequate support.

Action:

1. Include this as an agenda item for the next meeting.
2. To request the chief executive be invited to a meeting to address points covered during the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

9. DRAFT ANNUAL HEALTH REPORT FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The chair varied the order of business on the agenda - this item was taken after item 6.

Dr Stacy John-Legere, designated doctor for Looked After Children, Southwark introduced the report and outlined the health services for looked after children in Southwark which includes those looked after children outside the borough.

Summary of presentation:

- Children's homes built in Southwark – prime focus is a full access to health services
- Highlighted the health services in England – with reference to the draft model of ICB (integrated care board) structure
- To continue the delivery of services at Sunshine House
- The challenges for those looked after children that live furthest away from the borough
- Physical access needs, focus work on immunisation services
- Recognise the health needs; look at their specific needs and to receive further clarity on health support
- Continue close contact with Olive House (children's home) – where quarterly meetings are held, undertake medication audit, development training and work regularly /quarterly to ensure young people have a healthy lifestyle
- Develop partnerships and away days for staff – to build teamwork.

Sarah O'Connor, designated nurse for Looked After Children addressed the meeting and outlined the following:

- Positive up in performance /referral rate has increased, slightly seen people (98%) provide further health information
- Better processes in place
- Health needs of young people; track the most vulnerable to ensure they get the same access to timely services, and how they deliver these services to young people
- Review and commissioning of health services
- The baseline increase of teenagers that use substances with spectrum of drug use becoming wider
- Direct referrals are made due to the impact of substances
- Strategy on this would now be widened to address these types of substances
- Difference between abuse and use needs to be highlighted by way of 'strategic reporting'
- Continued conversation with young people on types of substance use.

Dr Stacy John-Legere addressed mental health services:

- It is estimated that 40 percent of looked after children or care leavers would

struggle with their mental health

- Not all care leavers would have direct access to mental health services
- Need to ensure that over 18s have access to these services
- Target those that are on the autism spectrum (address pathway)
- Gender related – work with them as a service
- Olive house – check whether a children's place is more adequate or a foster home – it also includes addressing family life and speak to them about returning to their birth family.

Points highlighted during the presentation:

- Access to mental health services (40%) focus on not having the care leavers services should be part of the cohort.
- Mental health services are available – up to the age of 25 (conduct surveys with young people)
- More work being done regarding access to health services, treatment and clinical decision
- Understanding the constraints that the health service has – providing other forms of support
- Access to GP services: Launch of bright spot in September 2025 to seek the views of young people to address their needs when it comes to their mental health needs
- Mental health main focus: Promote sport and a healthy diet through ways of communicating with young people and carers; this initiative would be incorporated in the health assessment
- Substance abuse and misuse – practitioner will be available to help those young people with the misuse and abuse of substances and provide service through the pathway programme
- Also check with other local authorities on their processes
- Provide early intervention when tackling issues like self-medication and misuse of substances.

Action:

1. To note that the above be included as an agenda item, with reference on drug use and self-medication so there is a clear understanding of the issues young people face. In addition, invite the relevant professionals to attend a committee meeting.
2. Speaker Box be involved in addressing the issues young people face on substance misuse.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report and its contents be noted in relation to the delivery of health services for Children Looked After (CLA) and Care Leavers who are in the care of London Borough of Southwark.

- That the feedback /comments on the Southwark Children Looked After Health report for consideration by the Children Looked After Health leads across the health economy be noted.

10. SOUTHWARK HOMES FOR SOUTHWARK CHILDREN - SHORT REPORT

The report was not circulated within five clear working days prior to committee because it missed the agenda despatch deadline. As the item was listed on the committee's workplan it was agreed that it should be considered at this meeting.

Helen Woolgar, assistant director Safeguarding and Care presented the report and addressed points about providing more homes for care leavers in the borough especially as some care leavers had moved back to the borough.

The report referred to 20 individual projects/ improvement activities that had been delivered that were matched with the corporate parenting strategy priorities:

- Developing the Kinship Care local offer; guidance requires local authorities to cover all forms of kinship care; where a child is being raised in the care of a friend or family member who is not their parent which can be done formal kinship care, special guardianships, child arrangement order
- Children's Residential Development
- Council's approach to corporate parenting
- Foster care sufficiency.

Other points that were addressed during the presentation:

- Recruitment of foster carers, providing more support and resources would be put into this
- There are more foster children in residential care due to lack of foster carers in the region.

Action:

The council write formally to central government, detailing the points that were raised at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That contents of the report be noted.

11. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2025-26

RESOLVED:

That the workplan be noted and the following included for the next meeting and meetings thereafter:

22 October 2025

- Speakerbox verbal update and report back on actions
- Exclusions report back
- Update on mental health support and CAMHS
- Foster annual report (including focus on recruitment)
- Southwark homes for Southwark children update
- Update on corporate parenting strategy 2025-30.

Additional items:

- Employment opportunities for care leavers
- Impact on substance abuse – young people.

25 February 2026

- Speakerbox verbal update / annual report
- Annual independent reviewing officer report
- Adoption annual report
- Annual virtual head teacher's report
- Southwark homes for Southwark children update.

22 April 2026

- Speakerbox verbal update
- Southwark homes for Southwark children update
- Update on local offer on Kinship care.

To be allocated

- Exploitation, risk and harm and measures to break the cycle.

The meeting ended at 4.10 pm.

CHAIR:

DATED:

Meeting Name:	Corporate Parenting Committee
Date:	22 October 2025
Report title:	Annual Virtual Headteacher's Report 2024-2025
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All wards
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if appropriate)	Not Applicable
From:	Virtual School Headteacher

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Corporate Parenting Committee note the Virtual Headteacher's Report for Southwark Looked After Children.
2. That the Corporate Parenting Committee feedback any comments on Southwark Looked After Children's education for consideration by the Virtual School Headteacher.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. As the Corporate Parent for Southwark's Looked After Children, Southwark Council has a responsibility to ensure that the children within our care have the best possible chance of accomplishing high educational achievements.
4. The role of the Virtual School Headteacher is to ensure that the educational achievement of children looked after by the authority is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare. This includes ensuring that all have access to the best education provision, monitoring children's progress and ensuring swift action is taken in time of change and crisis to meet the child's educational needs.
5. Statutory guidance on 'Promoting the Education of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children' (Department for Education, 2018) requires the Virtual School Headteacher to produce an annual report and to report regularly on the attainment, progress and school attendance of Looked After Children through the authority's corporate parenting structures.
6. The Virtual Headteacher's Report outlines the educational progress, attainment and attendance of Southwark's children in care in the 2024-

2025 school year. The report indicates key priorities for the Virtual School and provides an overview of Pupil Premium Looked After Children (LAC) spend.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. The Virtual Headteacher's report is the Covering Report (attached here).
6. The Virtual School Highlights report is covered in Appendix 1.

Policy framework implications

7. The Borough Plan has a commitment to '*give young people the best opportunities in life*'. The Virtual School report demonstrates working with and for children and across a multitude of stakeholders and professionals to achieve this commitment.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

8. This education of Looked After Children is an important aspect of their care, and the work described in the report is expected to make an impact on the future life chances and opportunities for this part of the community.
9. The decision to note this report has been judged to have no or a very small impact on local people and communities.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

10. This report encompasses educational services provided to all children and young people in care of LB Southwark and includes details of the ethnic breakdown of this cohort as well as their Special Educational Needs.
11. The Council is committed to providing fair and just services, addressing inequality. The provision of good and effective education services to Looked After Children is an important way that the council and its partners demonstrate commitment to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people

Health impact statement

12. This paper considers the education of children and young people in care of LB Southwark. Good education outcomes are closely correlated with positive health and well-being.

Climate change implications

13. There are no overt implications regarding climate change

Resource implications

14. There are no resource implications of this report, which is provided for information.

Legal implications

15. There are no additional legal implications at this time.

Financial implications

16. This paper is for information only. There are no financial implications attached

Consultation

17. The annual report includes case studies which aim to reflect the direct experiences of children and young people in care of LB Southwark

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**Assistant Chief Executive – Governance and Assurance**

18. A concurrent was not applicable for this report.

Strategic Director of Resources

19. A concurrent was not applicable for this report.

Other officers

20. None.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Equalities Act 2010	Education Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 4 th floor, 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH	Usha Singh 020 7525 54076 07548712129
Link: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents		
Council Assembly, 25 November 2020 – Item 6.1 – Appendix A Refresh of the Council Plan: Borough Plan	Education Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 4 th floor, 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH	Usha Singh 020 7525 54076 07548712129
Link: https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s92006/Appendix%20A%20Southwarks%20Borough%20Plan%202020.pdf		
Department of Education: SEND	Education Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 4 th floor, 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH	Usha Singh 020 7525 54076 07548712129
Link: https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/special-educational-needs-disabilities		
The Health Inequalities Framework 2020	Education Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 4 th floor, 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH	Usha Singh 020 7525 54076 07548712129
Link: https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s90726/Appendix%201.pdf		
Climate Change Strategy	Education Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 4 th floor, 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH	Usha Singh 020 7525 54076 07548712129
Link:		

https://www.southwark.gov.uk/environment/climate-emergency/reaching-net-zero/our-plan-for-net-zero

Southwark Stands Together	Education Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 4 th floor, 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH	Usha Singh 020 7525 54076 07548712129
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Link:

https://www.southwark.gov.uk/engagement-and-consultations/southwark-stands-together

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Highlights Report

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	David Quirke-Thornton, Strategic Director of Children and Adult Services	
Report Author	Usha Singh, Virtual School Headteacher	
Version	Final	
Dated	10 September 2025	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments sought	Comments included
Assistant Chief Executive – Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director of Resources	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		3 October 2025



Southwark Virtual School

Annual Headteacher's Report

Academic year 2024-2025

Authors: Usha Singh, Claire Hamilton, Gemma Simcock, Alice Beresford

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Introduction

1. This report is based on pupil-level data maintained by the Southwark Virtual School, alongside educational outcomes reported by schools for the academic year 2024–2025. It presents:
 - **An overview of the work and impact of Southwark Virtual School**, underscoring our unwavering commitment to advocating for children in care. We remain dedicated to fostering high aspirations and securing the best possible outcomes for every child.
 - **A forward-looking analysis**, identifying key areas for development to further enhance educational outcomes. We maintain high ambitions for all children in care and are resolute in our efforts to support their progression into successful adulthood.
 - **A reflection on the collaborative nature of our work**, which is supported by the meaningful contributions of children and young people, carers, parents, school leaders, social care professionals, and wider partners. Through joint planning, we aim to establish purposeful academic and vocational pathways into education, employment, and training—minimising disruption and promoting stability.
2. Please note that the data presented in this report is provisional and subject to revision until all national datasets are finalised.

Education Landscape Changes: 2025-2026

3. SEN Funding and EHCP Guidance

- EHCP Funding Shift: Children with EHCPs are now funded by the local authority where they are usually resident, not where they attend school. This marks a significant change for Virtual Schools, requiring new coordination strategies.
- EHCP Digitisation: A national rollout of digital EHCPs is underway to streamline processes

4. Virtual School Head (VSH) Role Expansion

- Kinship Care Inclusion: The VSH role now formally includes children in kinship care. Local authorities must publish a Kinship Local Offer,
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill: Clause 6 extends the VSH's statutory duties to promote educational achievement for children in kinship care.

5. Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025

- Statutory Guidance: Working Together to Improve School Attendance is now statutory.
- Online Safety: Expanded to include risks from misinformation, disinformation, and AI.
- Kinship Care: Reinforced expectations for VSHs to support children in kinship arrangements.

6. Ofsted Inspection Framework Overhaul

- Single Judgement Removed: Schools will receive multiple grades across: Quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, Personal development, Leadership and management.
- New Grading Scale: Exemplary, Strong, Secure, Attention Needed, Causing Concern.
- School Report Cards: Provide detailed insights for parents and carers.
- Inclusion Focus: Stronger emphasis on SEND and disadvantaged learners.

7. Attendance Guidance Updates

- Electronic Registers: Mandatory and shared daily with the DfE.
- Penalty Notices: National thresholds and increased fines.
- Senior Attendance Champion: Must set a clear vision and understand attendance data.
- Health Support: More detail on supporting pupils with physical or mental ill health.

8. Labour Government Education Policy

- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill: All new teachers must hold or be working toward QTS. Academies must follow national teacher pay and conditions.
- Early Years Expansion: 300 new school-based nurseries by September 2025.
- Skills England: Replaces IfATE to lead a unified post-16 strategy.

9. RISE Consultants and School Improvement

- RISE (Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence) teams were launched in February 2025 to support schools with persistent underperformance, especially those rated below 'Good' in consecutive Ofsted inspections.

- SEND Alignment: RISE teams may collaborate with Virtual Schools and local authorities to address systemic barriers affecting vulnerable learners.

10. Additional Changes in 2025

- AI and EdTech Integration: Assistive technology training is now mandatory for new teachers.
- School Mental Health Leads are now mandatory in secondary schools.
- Post-16 Pathways: Expansion of T-Levels and degree apprenticeships.

Virtual School Staff Structure

11. **Southwark Virtual School** is part of Children's and Adults' Services, supporting children looked after, previously looked-after children, children with a Social Worker, and those in Kinship Care. Its structure delivers specialist educational support across all phases. and is aligned to both national priorities and local needs.

12. Leadership Team

- **Virtual School Headteacher** – Provides strategic leadership, ensuring statutory duties are met and driving innovation to improve outcomes for children known to Social Care.
- **Deputy Head for Primary and Secondary Phases** – Oversees statutory school-age provision, ensuring high-quality education planning, monitoring, and intervention.
- **Deputy Head for KS5** – Leads on post-16 education, including pathways into further education, training, and employment, with a strong focus on transition and progression.

13. Education Advisors

- Provides advice and guidance to schools, social workers, and carers to support the education of children in care, previously looked-after children, and those with a social worker.
- Monitors academic progress, attendance, and wellbeing, identifying barriers to learning and recommending targeted interventions.
- Promotes trauma-informed and inclusive practices in education settings, helping professionals understand the impact of early adversity on learning and behaviour.

14. Education Advisors - Additional responsibilities taken up by include:

- **Tuition Lead** – Coordinates bespoke learning packages and manages commissioned tuition providers.
- **PLAC Lead** – Supports Previously Looked After Children through school guidance, family engagement, and access to funding.
- **Participation Leads** – Promote pupil voice, engagement, and enrichment opportunities.
- **SEN Lead** – Supports inclusive practice by working closely with schools and SEND services to ensure tailored, high-quality provision for children with special educational

needs. Provides oversight of commissioned Educational Psychology and Speech and Language Therapy, to ensure timely and effective interventions.

- **Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Leads**– Supports career planning, post-16 transitions, and access to vocational pathways.
- **UASC Lead** – Provides tailored support for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, ensuring access to education, trauma-informed approaches, and culturally sensitive advocacy. This responsibility also supports post-16 transition planning and works closely with social care and ESOL providers to promote integration and achievement.

15. Strategic Inclusion and Oversight

- **The Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) Coordinator** provides strategic leadership to improve educational outcomes for this vulnerable group, in line with Department for Education guidance. They work in partnership with schools, social care, and other agencies to ensure joined-up support and trauma-informed practice. The role also involves monitoring data, promoting inclusive approaches, and ensuring the voices of children with a social worker inform service development.

16. Project Officer Team

- The **Project Officer Team** plays a vital role in enabling the Virtual School to deliver its strategic priorities. Their work contributes to the operational strength and responsiveness of the service. Key responsibilities include:
 - ❖ Supporting the implementation and quality assurance of PEPs, ensuring they are timely, meaningful, and outcome-focused.
 - ❖ Facilitating multi-agency collaboration, including scheduling and preparing for key meetings with schools, social care, and external providers.
 - ❖ Contributing to service development by identifying operational gaps, streamlining workflows, and supporting innovation in practice.
 - ❖ Assisting with the delivery of training, events, and communications that promote the Virtual School's work across the borough.
 - ❖ Acting as a bridge between strategic leadership and frontline delivery, ensuring that priorities are translated into effective action.

17. Business Support

- Provides essential coordination of systems and processes, financial and monitoring.

18. New Pilot Role: Residential Care Education Advisor

- In the coming year, a temporarily vacant Education Advisor post will be repurposed as a pilot role focused on Residential Care. This dedicated advisor will address the education needs of children placed in Southwark's new residential care home, providing on-site support and tracking the impact of care placement changes on education continuity. The role will strengthen the education offer and promote stability for children in residential settings, reflecting Southwark's commitment to improving outcomes for its most vulnerable learners.

Ofsted and Care Quality Commission Visit

19. Thematic Review: The purpose of this series of visits aimed to aggregate insights about local area approaches to children not in school, to learn from existing practice and to identify opportunities for improvement.

Ofsted carried out this visit under a section 118(2) request from the Department for Education. The CQC provided assistance to Ofsted under paragraph 9(1) of schedule 4 to the Health and Social Care Act 2008.

'Social Workers draw on specialist advice from the Virtual School to support their work with schools and health professionals. Children with SEND who are not in school continue to receive tailored support through commissioned and community programmes, such as tuition and therapeutic mentoring. Care-experienced young people with SEND also contribute to forums that shape and inform practice about how best, in their opinion, services can be crafted to meet the needs of other children.'

'The Virtual School provides individualised support for children with SEND through a dedicated SEND lead and allocated advisors. For looked-after children with SEND, including those not in school, we were told that services such as educational psychology, speech and language therapy and CAMHS are commissioned specifically to help expedite assessments. As a result, it was reported that looked-after children with SEND do not face long delays in securing the assessment and support that they need, or an EHC plan, where required. We heard that looked-after children with SEND are placed in appropriate educational settings more quickly than other children with SEND.'

'For some looked-after children with SEND, instability in their care placements has disrupted their education. We were told that moves to new areas often delayed EHC plan transfers, compounding children's attendance issues and delaying access to suitable schools. Despite these challenges, it was reported that Social Workers and the Virtual School work with local agencies to bridge gaps. We heard that many of these children are supported through home tutoring and social activities to maintain learning and reduce disruption while they are out of school. It was reported that this wrap-around support has helped many looked-after children with SEND to move back to school successfully.'

Virtual School – Training Programme

20. Training and Support Provided by the Virtual School:

The Virtual School delivers a comprehensive training programme designed to promote excellence in fulfilling both statutory and non-statutory responsibilities. This programme includes:

21. Training for Designated Teachers:

Online sessions focused on the completion of Personal Education Plans (PEPs), alongside in-person conferences covering the role of the Designated Teacher, effective target setting, use of Pupil Premium Plus, and tutoring provision.

22. Training for Social Workers and Teaching Staff:

Topics include attachment awareness, strategies to improve attendance and inclusion, referral processes for Speech and Language Therapy (SALT), support for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), education for Children Looked After (CLA) in post-16 settings, and transitions into Key Stages 3 and 5.

23. Collaborative Training Delivery:

The Virtual School works in partnership with:

- The Special Educational Needs (SEN) service to deliver training on the intersection of SEN and CLA.
- The linked Educational Psychologist (EP) to provide guidance on referrals, assessments, and tailored support.
- Carelink clinicians to explore the impact of trauma on learning.
- The Children in Need (CIN) Coordinator and Early Intervention Team deliver training on educational target setting and attendance for children with a Social Worker.
- The Safeguarding Forum to offer training on supporting Previously Looked After Children and those in Kinship Care arrangements.

24. Support for Trauma-Informed and Relational Practice:

The Virtual School actively supports schools in achieving accreditation for trauma-informed and relational practice through the Attachment Research Community (ARC) Pathway. In addition to funding attendance at both national and regional ARC conferences—21 schools attended the regional conference in 2025—the Virtual School has also purchased licences for the *Behaviour Change Programme* developed by *When The Adults Change*. Currently, three schools are actively engaged in this programme.

Strategic Support for Children Previously Looked After

25. Southwark Virtual School has a dedicated officer for Children Previously Looked After (CPLA). This role responds to the overlapping vulnerabilities between CPLA, children in kinship care, and those with a social worker. The lead works closely with the Children in Need (CIN) Coordinator to ensure a joined-up approach to supporting these cohorts. The primary aim is to build capacity across the system to better understand the diverse and often complex needs of CPLA, and to raise both engagement and attainment for this group.

26. In line with statutory guidance, which places a duty on schools and local authorities to promote the educational achievement of previously looked-after children, the Virtual School provides strategic leadership and practical support to schools, carers, and families. This includes:

27. **Close collaboration with key services** such as the Post Adoption Team, SGO Connected, Keeping Families Together, Coram, and South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLAM), to offer expert advice and guidance on educational matters.

28. **Training and professional development** for school staff and social workers to:

- Raise awareness of the specific vulnerabilities and barriers faced by CPLA and children in kinship care
- Promote effective identification and support strategies
- Provide guidance on the appropriate and impactful use of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+), in line with DfE expectations

29. This work supports the statutory requirement for Virtual School Heads to offer information and advice to schools and families, and to promote high aspirations and educational stability for previously looked-after children. It also aligns with the extended duty to provide strategic leadership for improving outcomes for children with a social worker.

Southwark's Children in Care Population

30. The data presented reflects the current profile of Southwark Council's children in care who are of statutory school age. It is important to note that the number of children in care is subject to continual fluctuation, as individuals enter and exit the care system.

Reported Gender – Statutory School Age

31. As of the end of the 2024-2025 academic year, Southwark Virtual School recorded a total of 355 pupils on roll. Of these, 243 were of statutory school age, and 112 were in Key Stage 5. The cohort comprised 144 females and 211 males, with boys representing a larger proportion of the population—a trend that has remained consistent over time.

Table 1: Reported Gender – Statutory School Age

	Total CLA	Male	%	Female	%
Nursery	6	4	2%	2	1%
Yr R	3	2	1%	1	0%
Yr 1	9	5	2%	4	2%
Yr 2	11	4	2%	7	3%
Yr 3	12	8	3%	4	2%
Yr 4	7	5	2%	2	1%
Yr 5	6	2	1%	4	2%
Yr 6	11	3	1%	8	3%
Yr 7	21	7	3%	14	6%
Yr 8	21	13	5%	8	3%
Yr 9	31	20	8%	11	5%
Yr 10	45	18	7%	27	11%
Yr 11	60	45	19%	15	6%
Total	243	136	56%	107	44%

Special Education Needs (SEN) - National Overview of Special Educational Needs (SEN) – Academic Year 2024-2025

32. The total number of pupils identified with special educational needs (SEN) in England has risen to **over 1.7 million**, marking an increase of approximately **93,700 pupils (5.6%)** compared to the previous year.

33. The proportion of pupils with an **Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan** has increased to **5.3%**, up from **4.8% in 2024**.

34. Pupils receiving **SEN support without an EHC plan** now represent **14.2%** of the school population, up from **13.6% in 2023**

35. This reflects a continued upward trend in formal identification and support for complex needs as well as a growing recognition of additional needs within mainstream settings. These figures highlight the increasing demand for inclusive education and tailored support across all phases of schooling.

Special Educational Needs / In and Out of Borough - Southwark Statutory school age CLA

36. **High SEN Prevalence:** Over 40% of Statutory School Age CLA have identified special educational needs (EHCP or SEN Support), significantly above the national average for all pupils (19.5% in 2024-2025).

37. **EHCP Dominance:** The majority of SEN-identified CLA have **an EHCP (83 out of 99)**, suggesting a high level of need and formal support.

38. **Placement Patterns:**

- **7.41%** of CLA are placed in borough, while 33.33% are placed out of borough. This may reflect challenges in local capacity or the need for specialist provision.

39. **Year Group Trends:**

- **Year 11** has the highest number of EHCPs (21) and SEN Support cases (5), indicating a concentration of need in older cohorts.
- **Years 9–11** collectively account for 54 out of 83 EHCPs (65%), highlighting the importance of transition planning and post-16 support.

40. **The geographic spread** of Southwark Virtual School pupils remains like previous years. 73% of children in Care are placed outside of the borough.

41. 73% (178 children) of Southwark statutory school age children in care are in secondary education.

Table 2: Special Education Needs / In and Out of Borough by

	Total CLA	EHCP	SEN Support	In Borough	Out Borough
Nursery	6	0	0	0	0
Yr R	3	0	0	0	0
Yr 1	9	1	0	1	0
Yr 2	11	2	0	1	1
Yr 3	12	6	0	1	5
Yr 4	7	2	1	0	3
Yr 5	6	0	0	0	0
Yr 6	11	4	1	0	5
Yr 7	21	5	3	4	4
Yr 8	21	9	2	1	10
Yr 9	31	14	2	2	14
Yr 10	45	19	2	3	18
Yr 11	60	21	5	5	21
Total	243	83	16	18	81

Ethnicity Analysis

42. The ethnic composition of Southwark's children looked after (CLA) cohort reflects the borough's diverse and urban demographic profile. While this distribution may differ from national averages, it remains broadly consistent with that of Southwark's **statistical neighbours** and the wider **inner-city London** context.

43. **Black/Black British** pupils make up the largest ethnic group, accounting for **45%** of the cohort (including African – 26%, Caribbean – 11%, and Other Black – 8%). This is significantly higher than the national average for CLA, where White British children typically form the majority.

44. **White British** children represent **20%** of the cohort, which is lower than national proportions but aligns with Southwark's local population trends.

45. **Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups** account for **26 pupils (11%)**, with notable representation across all subcategories, reflecting the borough's multicultural family structures.

46. **Asian/Asian British** children make up **3%** of the cohort, with small numbers across Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, and Other Asian backgrounds.

47. **Other ethnic groups** and **Not stated** categories together represent **6.5%**, which is typical in urban areas with complex migration patterns and evolving identities.

Table 3: Southwark's Cohort Breakdown by Ethnicity			
Ethnicity	Number	%	
Asian/Asian British/Any other Asian Background	5	2%	
Asian/Asian British/Bangladeshi	1	0%	
Asian/Asian British/Chinese	1	0%	
Asian/Asian British/Indian	1	0%	
Asian/Asian British/Pakistani	1	0%	
Black/Black British	1	0%	
Black/Black British/African	64	26%	
Black/Black British/Any other Black background	20	8%	
Black/Black British/Caribbean	27	11%	
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups/Any other Mixed background	23	9%	
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups/White and Asian	2	1%	
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups/White and Black African	5	2%	
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups/White and Black Caribbean	19	8%	
Not Stated/Information not yet obtained - not refused	4	2%	
Other Ethnic Groups/Any other ethnic group	11	5%	
White/Any other White Background	7	3%	
White/British	49	20%	
White/Irish	1	0%	
White/Irish Traveller	1	0%	
Total	243	100%	

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

48. An unaccompanied asylum-seeking child is an individual under 18, who has applied for asylum, is has arrived in the country without a parent or legal guardian.

49. The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in care has decreased slightly this academic year, mirroring the overall decline of children entering Care.

50. Most Southwark unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are aged 16+ at 86%; and the remaining 16% are aged between 13-15 years. Most are male at 94%. 6% are female.

Table 4: Number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
44	53	49	54	58 (16%)	50 (14%)

51. Challenges –

- Rising intake of UASC across London is straining Further Education College resources due to high demand for ESOL course places.
- The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) creates pressure points during the academic year, making it harder to place newly arrived UASC into education. This is a national concern.
- Limited entry points to enrol onto ESOL courses mean that as the year progresses, courses fill up and options become restricted.
- Age disputes present an additional challenge - some colleges are hesitant to admit learners whose age or identity is unclear.

52. Successes

- ESOL Specialist Advisor: Provides guidance and support to Social Workers, Care placement staff, and young people.
- Influencing ESOL Capacity: Through regular consultation with main providers, the Virtual School has helped increase ESOL capacity in FE Colleges - enabling most new UASC to be placed in education within 14 days of completing a PEP.
- UASC Networking Group: Southwark Virtual School collaborates with neighbouring Virtual Schools in South East London to stay updated on ESOL education, resources, and support.
- ESOL Sports Festival: Co-hosted with 6 other Virtual Schools, the event welcomed 45 UASC and ESOL learners (33% from Southwark), promoting inclusion and showcasing strong multi-agency collaboration. [Charlton Athletic Football Club ESOL festival for young people](#)
- During the summer holidays, 13 Southwark young people were invited to attend a summer ESOL camp hosted by Winchmore Tutors at Crystal Palace Football Club for English lessons in the morning and sports activities in the afternoon.

Attendance Analysis

53. Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide-ranging and complex, often specific to individual pupils and families, and extend beyond the school gates.

54. Statutory guidance, *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (August 2024), emphasises the importance of multi-agency collaboration to address attendance challenges.

55. Evidence to show a strong link between attendance and attainment. Pupils with the highest attendance consistently achieve better outcomes at both GCSE and A level.

56. Attendance remains a key priority for Southwark Virtual School and Social Care teams. We continue to work in partnership to drive improvement through

Persistent Absenteeism

57. Southwark's children in Care recorded an average persistent absence rate of 29.73%, with February 2025 showing the highest rate at 33%, and July 2025 the lowest at 25%. This trend suggests that persistent absence increases in the spring term, peaking in the lead-up to exams, and then declines as the academic year concludes. These patterns highlight the need for sustained support and engagement strategies, particularly during high-pressure periods.

Table 5: Persistent Absentees by Month 2024-2025

Month	Students	%
Sep-24	57	28%
Oct-24	58	29%
Nov-24	58	28%
Dec-24	61	30%
Jan-25	66	32%
Feb-25	70	33%
Mar-25	69	31%
Apr-25	73	32%
May-25	66	29%
Jun-25	70	30%
Jul-25	61	25%

58. Persistent Absence rates amongst girls are on the rise with girls at 49% and boys at 51%. In the last report, boys were almost 2 times as likely to be persistent absentees than girls.

Table 6: Persistent Absence by Gender

Female	30	49%
Male	31	51%

59. Children with no SEN appear to be overrepresented on the list of persistent absentees. This may point to a clue that identification of SEND may be required. Virtual School Education Advisors and children's Social Workers look into each instance and pursue SEN assessments where these may be required.

Table 7: SEND profile of the Persistent Absentee Cohort

	2023-2024	2024-2025
EHCP	20	22
SEN Support	7	2
No SEN	52	37
Total	79	61

60. Percentage attendance of children who are persistently absent shows that several children are on the threshold of being persistently absent 80% to 89%.

Table 7: Percentage Attendance in the Persistent Absentee Cohort

Percentages	2023-2024	2024-2025
0% -	4	2
1% - 29%	11	6
30% - 49%	12	8
50% - 59%	18	9
60% - 69%	9	7
70% - 79%	9	10
80% - 89%	16	19

61. The Virtual School and children's Social Workers use targeted casework, data analysis, early intervention, and regular multi-agency panels to agree priority actions.

62. Attendance of children who are persistently absent by year group indicates that children Years 10 and 11 make up 61% of all persistently absent children.

Table 8: Attendance in the Persistent Absentee Cohort by Year Group

%	2023-2024	2024-2025
Yr R to Yr 6	7	9
Year 7	2	3
Year 8	4	6
Year 9	13	6
Year 10	19	16
Year 11	34	21
Total	79	61

63. Key Stage 4 is overrepresented with 34 children recorded as Persistent Absentees.

64. Persistent Absence in this group is largely due to school refusal, change of care placement and SEN sufficiency issues, which is a current concern across many Local Authorities. Intensive work is taking place to turn this around and improve access to education for these groups.

65. Absence reasons in the group of persistent absentees show that the main contributor to missing school episodes is linked with change of Care placements. The Virtual School and Social Work Team Managers ensure that education forms part of the earliest discussions when a change of care placement is being considered.

Table 9: Southwark Absence reasons PA cohort – Reasons

Year	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Medical	5	8%	2
Illness	7	11%	7
School Refuser	7	0%	0
Change of care placement 1 or more placement change.	39	62%	59
New to care	8	13%	2
UASC	1	2%	7
Exclusions	3	5%	8
		12%	2
			3%

Authorised Absence	14	23%	9	13%	11	18%
Lates	4	6%	9	13%	9	15%
Unauthorised Absence	12	19%	28	41%	15	25%
Complex Case			2	3%	3	5%
Family Holiday Unauthorised			1	1%	1	2%
Reduced timetable	x	x	x	x	18	30%
Interview	x	x	x	x	1	2%

66. How Southwark Virtual School Monitors Attendance:

- The Virtual School commissions a daily attendance monitoring service that provides real-time updates, including confirmed reasons for absence. Data is reviewed to identify patterns, exclusions, and concerns, with Education Advisors and Social Workers following up promptly engaging schools around persistent absence, re-engagement planning, and safeguarding concerns linked to attendance.
- Project Officers liaise with schools to resolve coding discrepancies, clarify absence reasons, and support accurate reporting.

67. How we respond to persistent absenteeism

- Transition funding is offered to school where in year admissions take place to ensure attendance is supported and the education placement works.
- We advocate for children when there are suspensions and risk of exclusion and find solutions with schools.
- We secure education at the point of a placement change as quickly as we possibly can, to offer stability of care placements.
- We hold a monthly attendance panel with Education Advisors and Social Workers present to consider approaches to improve attendance.
- We offer Education Psychology, Speech and Language.
- We trigger statutory assessments for SEN when we can spot signs that this can improve engagement and in return attendance.
- For year 11 children who are Emotionally Based School Avoiders, we plan ahead with information advice and guidance (IAG) to work towards the best outcomes for successful transition into adulthood. We secure exam centres and support children taking exams.
- Ensure the school is trained in early years trauma and that school is attachment aware.
- We offer strategy meetings with multi-agency network and the support of foster carers.

68. Not just persistent absentees - There are at times less obvious patterns can easily go unnoticed. Sudden absences, for example, may well be due to illness, or a bereavement in the family, but they could also be more concerning reasons, particularly if they are unexplained.

Children with No School Place

69. All children, regardless of circumstance, are entitled to full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs. Children Missing Education (CME) are of compulsory school age, not on a school roll, and not receiving suitable education elsewhere. They are at increased risk of underachievement, exploitation, and becoming NEET.

[Children Missing Education - Guidance for Local authorities](#)

70. The Virtual School works closely with Social Care and education networks to ensure all children have an education offer and access to education. Children with No School Place (NSP) are monitored through a weekly panel. The Virtual School leads on securing education placements, tracking progress, and escalating concerns where education access is delayed or disrupted

71. The number of children without a school place rose sharply in April and remained consistently high through May and June, with **17 children** recorded each month. This sustained peak coincided with the exam preparation period, potentially impacting vulnerable pupils' access to education and support.

72. The drop to **7 children without a school place in July** reflects the exceptional efforts of education advisors and social workers, who worked intensively to secure placements before summer.

Table 10: Monthly Children with No School Place Totals

Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July
8	5	3	4	5	8	17	17	17	7

73. Virtual School advisors have successfully secured educational placements for children previously without a school place. The majority of these placements have been within Key Stage 4, aligning with the critical examination years and reflecting a targeted approach to supporting students at key academic transition points.

Table 11: Number of NSP children in each year group who have had school place found

EYFS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Yr 10	Yr 11
4	0	1	0	2	0	1	2	4	3	11	12

74. The table below demonstrates the reasons for No School Place for the **7 children without a school place in July**.

Table 12: No School Place				
Student	Year Group	EHCP	Reason No Schol Place	Additional Notes
Student 1	Year 10	No	Change of Care Placement	
Student 2	Year 8	Yes		Receiving EOTAS SEN consultations
Student 3	Year 10	Yes	Change of Care Placement	
Student 4	Year 10	No	EBSA	School place found. Awaiting start date
Student 5	Year 10	Yes	Change of Care Placement	
Student 6	Year 10	No	New to Care (UASC)	
Student 7	Year 4	Yes	Change of Care Placement	

75. What we do to address the priority of ensuring children have a school place

Southwark Virtual School holds a No School Panel (NSP) weekly throughout the academic year to secure education for children without a school place. Due to the safeguarding risks linked to missing education, attendance is compulsory. Staff share progress, escalate challenges, and access further support.

76. NSP panel members are: Virtual School Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher – Chair, All Education Advisors (EAs) who are able to report on actions taken to secure education.

77. Some reasons for No School Place include:

- The child/young person may be new into care and due to where the child/young person is placed, they are not able to attend their existing school [Southwark Council tries to ensure continuity of educational placement wherever possible]
- The child moves placement as an emergency [for example, if a care setting gives less than 28 days' notice] and new education provision needs to be sourced.
- Prior to coming into care, the child was electively home educated
- Proximity of new placement means the child cannot attend their existing school. The Virtual School tries to ensure continuity of educational placement wherever possible
- The child may leave secure or residential care which has education on site.
- The child may have SEN needs and the network may be unable to source specialist provision that can meet the needs as identified on the EHCP.

- The child/young person may be permanently excluded, and new education provision is being arranged.
- The child/young person may be placed in an area which lacks alternative provision options and mainstream may not be the best place to meet educational needs.

78. **Children at Risk of NSP** - Southwark Virtual School also monitors looked after children considered at risk of NSP as part of the weekly NSP panel. we consider a child to be at risk if:

- The child will be moving school or there is an imminent change of care placement.
- The child is at risk of a permanent exclusion (PEX).
- The child has an EHCP and there is a delayed school consultation process.

79. Children in this category are monitored and discussed so that we can stay ahead of any changes to education provision and ensure that actions are taken to prevent permanent exclusions.

Suspension and Exclusion Data

80. Suspensions have increased, and that 1 child was permanently excluded last year.

Table 13: Southwark Children in Care – Suspension Data

	2018 /2019	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Virtual School Roll - School Age	328	267	256	242
Children subject to Suspensions	51 (16%)	37 (14%)	40 (16%)	36 (15%)
Number of Suspensions	108	82	95	82
Number of Permanent Exclusion	2	0	1	0

81. Suspensions by Gender shows that boys are twice as likely to be suspended than girls.

Table 14: Southwark Children in Care Suspensions by Gender

	2018 /2019	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Boys	37 (73%)	27 (73%)	27(68%)	22(61%)
Girls	14 (27%)	10 (27%)	13(32%)	14(39%)
Total	51	37	40	36

82. Suspensions of children with SEN are particularly low. Children who do not have SEN are overrepresented in this group.

Table 15: Suspensions of Southwark Children in Care with SEN

	2018/2019		2022/2023		2023/2024		2024/2025	
Suspensions	51		37		40		36	
with SEN EHCP	12	24%	11	30%	16	40%	18	50%
with SEN Support	12	24%	7	19%	5	13%	1	3%
Total with SEN	24	47%	18	49%	21	53%	19	53%

83. The table below shows suspensions the number of children in care who received a suspension by year group. In line with national and local trends for looked after and non-looked after children, our suspension rates increase as children reach KS3 and KS4.

Table 16: Southwark Children in Care 2024/2025 Suspensions by Year Group

Year Group	Yr 1-3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
Pupils Suspended	4	1	0	0	3	4	6	10	8
Suspensions	6	1	0	0	11	10	13	30	11
Rate of suspension	1.5	1	0	0	3.7	2.5	2.2	3	1.4

84. The table below shows the average rate of suspensions per suspended child. This reflects a slight increase in students repeating behaviours that result in multiple suspensions.

Table 17: Southwark Children in Care Average Rate of Suspensions - 3 Year Trend

	2018/2019	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Number of Children Suspended	51	37	40	36
No of suspensions	108	82	95	82
Average suspensions per child	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.3

Southwark CLA Suspensions – Reasons

85. The table below relates to the reasons for suspensions. In some instances, suspensions were requested by Southwark Virtual School, as the Virtual School was challenging the practice of some secondary schools 'informally' suspending young people. Where there were instances of threat of permanent exclusion suspensions were suggested as other possible sanctions or options for education were considered.

Table 18: Southwark Children in Care Suspensions – Reasons								
Year	2018/2019		2022/2023		2023/2024		2024/2025	
Drug/Alcohol Related	2	2%	2	2%	2	2%	2	2%
Damage	1	1%	1	1%	2	2%	2	2%
Persistent Disruptive Behaviour	13	12%	26	32%	28	29%	25	30%
Physical Assault Against an Adult	6	6%	1	1%	9	9%	15	18%
Racist Abuse	1	1%	1	1%	1	1%	1	1%
Verbal Abuse/Threat Behaviour Adult	18	17%	2	2%	15	16%	10	12%
Verbal Abuse/Threatening Behaviour Pupil	3	3%	5	6%	4	4%	2	2%
Other	41	11%	24	29%	15	16%	23	28%
Offensive weapon or prohibited item	X	X	2	2%	X	0%	1	1%
School Yet to Clarify	X	X	2	2%	1	1%	1	1%
Sexual Misconduct	X	X	1	1%	X	0%	0	0%

Pupil Premium Plus

86. Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) is grant funding from the Department for Education (DfE) designed to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and close the gap with their peers.

87. Funding rates for the pupil premium in the financial year 2024 to 2025 is as follows:

- Looked-after Children: £2,630 per child
- Previously Looked-after Children: £2,630 per child, paid directly to schools
- Post-16 PP+: £106,755

88. Use of Retained Funding

Southwark Virtual School strategically allocates retained PP+ funding to support educational progress and wellbeing:

- **Tuition Programme**

During the summer holidays, the Virtual School tuition programme successfully supported 68 students through a blend of online and in-person sessions. Delivered over a five-week period, the initiative provided a total of 680 hours of personalised academic support, indicating a strong willingness to engage with learning and improve attainment. Feedback was excellent, and the Virtual School will continue to offer tuition during school holidays throughout the year.

Tuition is also provided in the following ways:

- ❖ **Supplementary Home Tuition:** to support academic achievement.
- ❖ **Exam Support:** additional tuition offered to children taking public exams.
- ❖ **Interim Alternative Provision:** for pupils between care placements or persistently absent.
- ❖ **Online Learning:** Immediate access for pupils without a school place or in remote areas.
- ❖ **Digital Resources:** Curriculum-aligned software to support continuity of learning.

- **Attendance monitoring** -The Virtual School commissions an external attendance monitoring service to monitor service enabling immediate responses to attendance concerns.
- **Exceptional needs funding** to support children's attainment and social/mental health well-being by topping up allocations as required by schools.
- **Fixed Term resourcing** ensuring each child has a dedicated education officer
- **Online learning programme** to secure swift access to education for pupils for any reason cannot access education in another format.
- **Letterbox Literacy** - Targeted resources for primary aged pupils targeted. Packages delivered to children are equipped with reading and writing material as well as stationery
- **Storytime** - supporting families and reluctant readers with accessible reading material. Storytime supplies magazines to our primary-aged looked after children.
- **Digital resource** - targeted curriculum related software to complement learning and to mitigate for changes in placements or missed schooling.
- **Specialist Support Services**

Recognising the impact of trauma on learning, the Virtual School promotes early access to specialist services. These services help remove barriers to learning and improve outcomes. Our specialist teams play a vital role in enhancing educational achievement and future life chances.

- ❖ **Southwark's Educational Psychology (EP) Service** provides specialist advice and support with learning, behaviour, or emotional development. EPs identify barriers and implement strategies that promote progress and inclusion. Their input also supports trauma-informed practice and helps reduce suspensions and exclusions. EPs contribute

to assessments, EHCPs, and referrals to services such as CAMHS and Carelink for pupils with Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA).

- ❖ **Speech and Language Therapy Service** - focuses on difficulties that affect learning and relationships. The service helps to strengthen communication skills and improve educational outcomes. Support includes one-to-one therapy, assessments, progress reports, a training offer to carers, educators and social workers and practical strategies.

Participation and Work with Speakerbox

89. Creating positive experiences and building a trusting and caring relationship with children and their families is a key component of keeping children engaged in education. Children who are engaged in education in a positive way are more likely to see academic progress.
90. The Virtual School contributes 50% of the cost of the post of a second Children's Rights Project Officer post to Speakerbox. This has driven up participation and has helped strengthen bonds between children and the Local Authority as corporate parents.
91. The Virtual School Participation team lead on the Summer Holiday Tuition Programme. More details can be located in this report in the Pupil Premium Plus section.

92. Luna

In October 2024, the Virtual School had the privilege of accompanying 25 young people and their carers to a captivating performance of **Luna** by the Birmingham Royal Ballet Company at **Sadler's Wells Theatre**. This memorable outing enriched our young people's social and cultural awareness, while also offering carers a meaningful space to connect and uplift one another.



The evening was truly uplifting. One young attendee was so inspired by the performance that she began practising ballet moves during the interval and shared her newfound dream of becoming a ballerina. A carer also expressed how valued she felt being invited to an event where she could fully engage and feel part of the experience.

Our young people were fully engaged, showing great respect for the traditions of classical ballet. They conducted themselves with poise and maturity—it was a privilege to accompany them.



93. There's A Bear On My Chair

In February, Southwark Virtual School hosted a delightful family outing to the first-ever stage adaptation of *There's A Bear On My Chair* by Ross Collins. This production was brought to life through the imaginative puppetry and artistic work of Toby Olié. The performance took place at Queen Elizabeth Hall and was tailored for children aged 2–7, though it was warmly received by attendees of all ages.



The atmosphere was filled with excitement and curiosity. The event was a joyful celebration of storytelling and creativity. Many families expressed their appreciation to the Virtual School for organising such a thoughtful and engaging experience.

It was a pleasure to see our young people and their carers immersed in the performance and sharing in the magic of live theatre.

94. Partnerships

Southwark Virtual School is excited to be forming partnerships with Antony Gormley Studios and the Young Vic Theatre to offer enriching opportunities to our looked after children. As part of this collaboration, children and young people will initially take part in guided studio and theatre tours, followed by engaging Q&A sessions with professionals in the field.



Those interested will potentially have the chance to apply for work experience placements, which may take place throughout the year. This initiative is designed to foster artistic exploration and support professional development, offering our young people meaningful access to the creative industries.



Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

95. A **Personal Education Plan (PEP)** is a statutory document for children in care aged 3 to 18 that outlines their educational needs and support. It ensures they receive targeted help to improve academic progress and wellbeing through regular reviews and collaboration.

96. Southwark Virtual School utilises the electronic Personal Education Plan (ePEP) platform, which is fully aligned with statutory guidance and designed to support high-quality educational planning for children in Care.

97. The ePEP platform has been successfully implemented by Southwark Virtual School for two academic years. Following feedback from Designated Teachers and Social Workers, the system has recently been reviewed and refined to ensure the production of high-quality PEPs. These improvements focus on providing detailed information on attendance, network views, support strategies, and pupil progress.



98. The platform offers a range of key benefits:

- Real-time monitoring of educational progress, attendance, and attainment.
- Portability of records, ensuring continuity across placements and staffing changes.
- Collaborative input from Designated Teachers, Education Advisors and Social Workers.
- Transparent documentation of Pupil Premium Plus funding usage and its impact.
- Secure storage of essential educational documents.
- Enhanced accountability and oversight, supporting quality assurance

99. **Southwark Statutory PEP completion figure at our last two school terms was 100%.**

2024 – 2025 PEP Completion



Looked-After Children - 2025 Exam Series

100. While the national qualification results for summer 2025 focus on overall GCSE, A level, and vocational outcomes, there is no disaggregated data yet available that specifically highlights the performance of looked-after children. This is consistent with previous years, where LAC outcomes are typically reported separately by local authorities or in broader DfE statistical releases later in the year.

101. The Children's Social Care in England 2025 report reinforces the importance of educational stability and support for children in care. It highlights ongoing efforts to improve placement stability, access to education, and multi-agency collaboration—all of which are known to influence educational outcomes.

102. The Education Hub's GCSE results guidance for 2025 also encourages schools and colleges to offer tailored support for students whose results may not meet expectations, including resit opportunities and alternative pathways. This is particularly relevant for looked-after children, who may face additional barriers to academic success.

Key stage 4 – Full Cohort: 59 Students

103. Southwark's 2024-2025 Year 11 cohort comprised 59 children.

- 44 children were in the 12 month plus cohort.
- 15 children were in care for 12 months or less.
- 39 were entered for GCSE examinations, entry level or functional skills qualifications.
- Southwark's 2024-2025 Year 11 Cohort Information
- 29% of the cohort are recorded as female and 71% male.
- 44% are recorded as having SEN. 36% with an EHCP and 8% SEN support.
- 20% were educated in the borough.

Table 19: Full Gender, SEN, CLA Cohort , In/Out of borough

Gender		
Male	42	71%
Female	17	29%
SEN/EHCP		
SEN Support	5	8%

EHCP	21	36%
Total SEN	26	44%
IN/OUT borough		
In borough	12	20%
Out of borough	47	80%

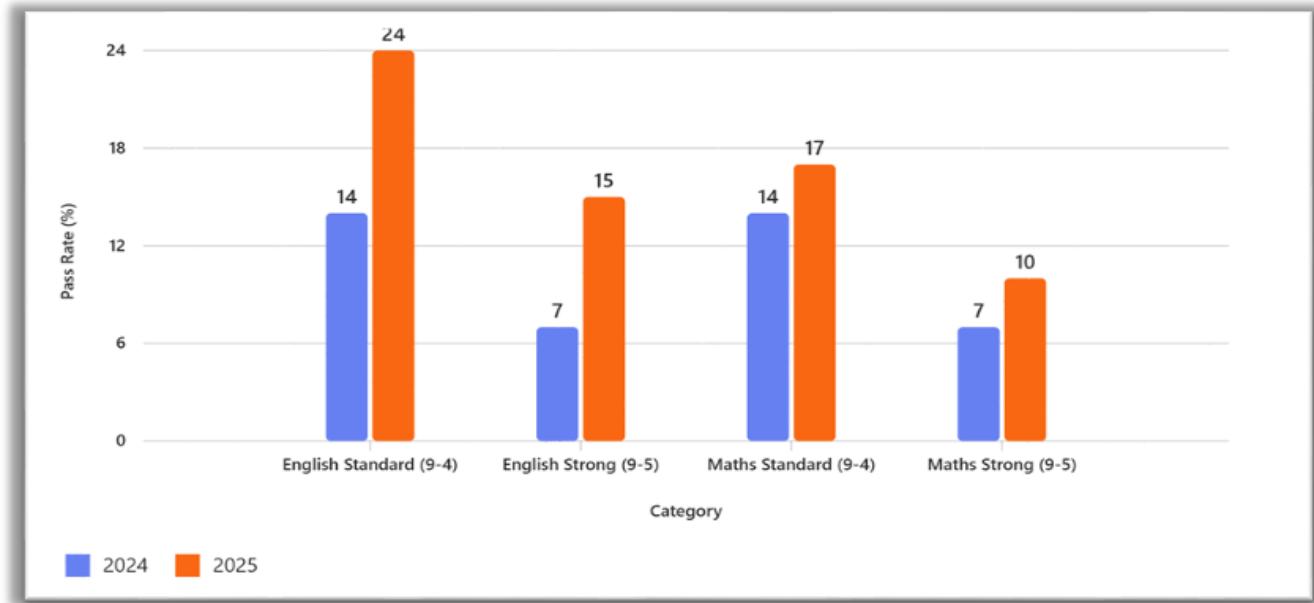
104. Ethnicity Breakdown of full Yr 11 cohort: 59 students

Table 20: Full CLA Cohort Ethnicity Breakdown

	Number	%
Asian/Asian British/Any other Asian Background	3	5%
Black/Black British/African	19	32%
Black/Black British/Any other Black background	4	7%
Black/Black British/Caribbean	6	10%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups/Any other Mixed background	5	8%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups/White and Asian	1	2%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups/White and Black African	1	2%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups/White and Black Caribbean	5	8%
Other Ethnic Groups/Any other ethnic group	6	10%
White/British	9	15%

105. Attainment of the full cohort: 59 students

- English saw the most significant improvement, especially in standard passes (+10%) and strong passes (+8%). This suggests targeted interventions or cohort-specific strengths.
- Maths showed modest gains in both categories (+3%), indicating a more stable but slower recovery.
- The overall trend from 2024 to 2025 is positive, with all categories improving, reversing the outcomes seen in 2024.



106. Outcomes in English and Maths.

Table 21: Full CLA Cohort - English and Maths

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
English Standard, 9-4	27%	47%	28%	14%	24%
English Strong, 9-5	16%	17%	20%	7%	15%
Maths Standard, 9-4	27%	17%	20%	14%	17%
Maths Strong, 9-5	20%	15%	8%	7%	10%

107. Children in Care achieving a pass (9-4) and a strong pass (9-5) in both English and Maths is plotted in the table below. 2025 shows a significant recovery in both pass categories compared to last year. This may reflect improved support strategies, targeted interventions, or changes in cohort characteristics.

Table 22: Full CLA Cohort - Achieving a pass in both English and Maths

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Standard, 9-4	22%	14%	16%	6%	15%
Strong, 9-5	15%	11%	8%	3%	8%

108. Children in Care achieving a grade 1-9 in English and Maths

Table 23: Full CLA Cohort - Achieved a Grade 1 - 9

	Number of children	%
English	27 (28 last year)	47% (39% last year)
Maths	28 (38 last year)	49% (54% last year)

Key Stage 4:12 month+ Cohort: 44 Students

109. Cohort Information of the 12 month+ cohort

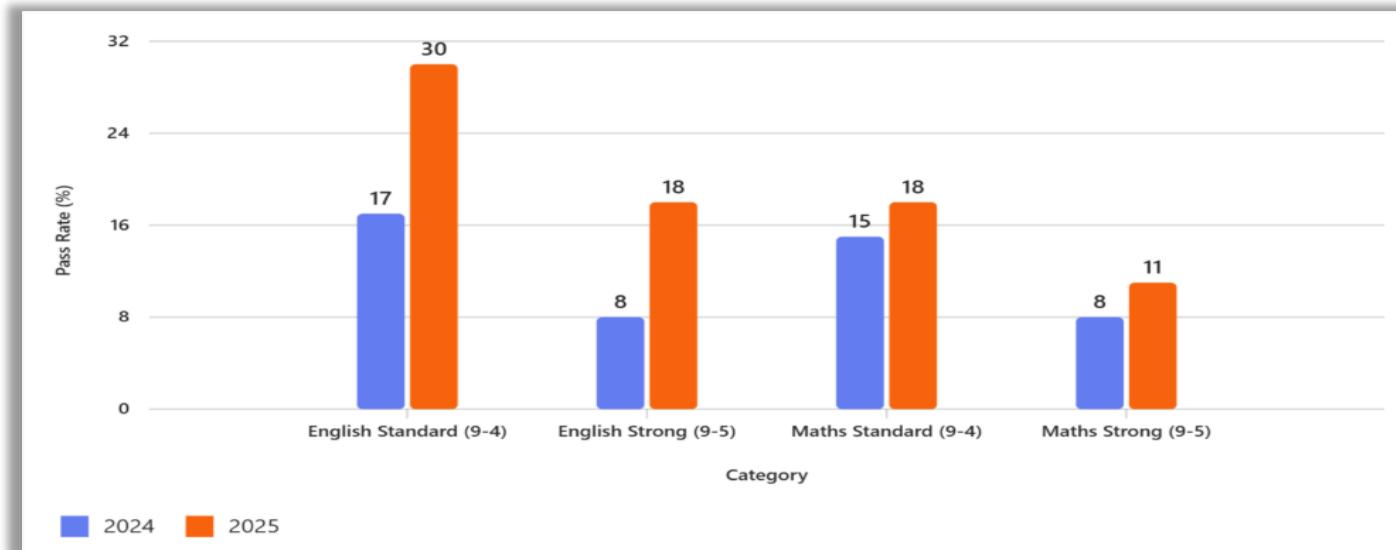
- Southwark's 2024-2025 Year 11 Cohort Information
- 27% of the cohort are recorded as female and 73% male.
- 57% are recorded as having SEN. 46% with an EHCP and 11% SEN support.
- 86% were educated out of borough.
- 39 were entered for GCSE examinations, entry level or functional skills qualifications.

Table 24: 2023-2024 Year 11 - 12 Month Plus Cohort

Gender		
Male	32	73% (65% last year)
Female	12	27% (35% last year)
SEN/EHCP		
SEN Support	5	11% (17% last year)
EHCP	20	46% (26% last year)
Total SEN	25	57% (43% last year)
In/Out Borough		
In borough	6	14% (26% last year)
Out of borough	38	86% (74% last year)

110. Attainment Information of 12 month + cohort

- English results show a strong recovery in 2025, especially in standard passes (+13%) and strong passes (+10%), returning to levels seen in 2020–2023.
- Maths improvements are more modest (+3% in both categories) but still mark a positive shift from the 2024 dip.



111. Southwark's 2025 CLA English and Maths results for our 12 months plus cohort is plotted against the outcome from previous years in table 25.

Table 25: English and Maths - 12 Month plus Cohort

Level	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
English Standard, 9-4	34%	34%	30%	17%	30%
English Strong, 9-5	20%	22%	21%	8%	18%
Maths Standard, 9-4	34%	22%	21%	15%	18%
Maths Strong, 9-5	24%	20%	9%	8%	11%

112. Southwark's 2025 CLA cohort achieving a pass (9-4) and a strong pass (9-5) in both English and Maths saw a significant increase in results from 2024 outcomes.

Table 26: Achieving a pass in both English and Maths - 12 Month plus Cohort

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Standard, 9-4	34%	20%	19%	6%	18%
Strong, 9-5	17%	17%	9%	3%	9%

113. Destinations of KS4 cohort following GCSE

Table 27: Destinations			
Student	EHCP/SEN	Borough	Year 11 > 12 destination
1		Lewisham	Lewisham College
2		Lambeth	La Retraite Roman Catholic Girls' School 6th Form
3	EHCP	Croydon	Spa School Bermondsey
4	SEN Support	Hertfordshire	Potters Bar Clinic School
5	EHCP	Croydon	La Retraite Roman Catholic Girls' School 6th Form
6		Southwark	Lillian Bayliss Tech School
7	SEN Support	Southwark	Christ the King Emmanuel 6th Form College
8	EHCP	Southwark	Meadowfield School
9		Kent	Lewisham College
10		Southwark	Capital City College
11		Enfield	Bexley College
12	EHCP	Bexley	TBC
13		Redbridge	Lewisham College
14		Redbridge	Saint Francis Xavier Sixth Form College (SFX)
15	EHCP	Lewisham	Charlton College
16	EHCP	Lambeth	Charlton College
17	EHCP	Lewisham	Southwark College
18	EHCP	Lambeth	Lambeth College
19		Camden	City and Islington College (Sixth Form @ Angel)
20	EHCP	Croydon	Beckmead College
21		Redbridge	New Vic College, Business Level
22	SEN Support	Lewisham	Bromley College
23		Redbridge	City and Islington College (Sixth Form @ Angel)
24	EHCP	Lambeth	Bromley College
25	EHCP	Medway	Bradfields Academy (Special School)
26		Bexley	Beths Grammar School
27		Southwark	TBC
28	SEN Support	Southwark	St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College

29		Lambeth	Croydon College
30	EHCP	Medway	Bradfields Academy (Special School)
31		Lambeth	Lambeth College,
32		Lewisham	South Bank College
33	EHCP	Southwark	Lambeth College
34	EHCP	Bromley	Westminster Kingsway College
35	EHCP	Southend-on-Sea	USP College
36	EHCP	Croydon	TBC
37	EHCP	Sheffield	Westminster College
38	EHCP	Fareham	NCC sports development College
39	SEN Support	Havering	CTK
40		Tower Hamlets	Newham College
41		Southwark	Capital City College
42	EHCP	Tonbridge& Malling	HMYOI Feltham (NEET)
43	EHCP	Croydon	Southbank Technical College
44		Essex	The Appleton School
45	EHCP	Southwark	Ark Globe Academy 6th form
46	EHCP	Perth	TBC
47		Croydon	Southbank College
48		Waltham Forest	Bromley College
49	SEN Support	Dartford	BOSCO
50	EHCP	Lewisham	Lewisham College
51		Lambeth	Saint Francis Xavier Sixth Form College (SFX)
52		Wandsworth	TBC
53		Waltham Forest	Lewisham College
54		Dartford	Lambeth College
55		Lewisham	Croydon College
56	EHCP	Lambeth	Sutton and District Training
57	EHCP		Croydon College
58	EHCP		Croydon College
59	SEN Support	Wandsworth	Lambeth College

Statutory School Age - Case Studies

Case Study 1

Student A intends to study 3 A Levels at a sixth form in Southwark.

Student A has an Education Health and Care Plan. Resilience and strength of character was shown since coming into care, in October 2024. Targeted to achieve grades 7 or above in English Language, English Literature, Science and Maths, Student A went the extra mile preparing for mock exams, tests or assignments by responding to feedback from teachers or tutors, studying independently using a personalised schedule. This level of preparation boosted exam technique. Student A accepted tuition offered by Southwark Virtual School. Teachers have never given Student A less than the very highest grades feedback reports for depth of knowledge, understanding of concepts and focused approach. As a result of pursuing excellence Student A moved up to Set 1 in Maths to enhance grades, even further. Student A's attendance was reported as above 96%.

Student A's commitment to excellence continued outside of lessons, as a talented musician writing compositions and singing.

Student A achieved throughout Year 11 whilst moving placements twice.

Student A achieved **English Language (7), English Literature (8), Maths (7), Combined Science (9-8), History (8) and Music (6)**

Case Study 2

Student B aims to continue learning English at **Lewisham College**.

Student B-an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Minor who arrived in the UK in September 2024. A school place was sourced to ensure Student B joined Year 11, before the mock exams/assessment period. Student B maintained composure, intentions and high ambitions to learn to speak and write in English, with zeal.

At Personal Education Plan meetings, it came to the network's knowledge that Student B experienced extreme trauma prior to arriving in the UK, with immediate concerns about the safety of family left behind. During the summer exams, Student B suffered bereavement, warranting additional support from the Virtual School, social care and the school liaising with the exam board. Student A accepted tuition in Maths and English offered by our Virtual School. Studying after school at interventions to boost grades. Student B received additional EAL sessions, a laptop under PP+ and home tuition for ESOL English.

In less than 1 year,

Student B achieved English Language (1), English Literature (U), Maths (1) and Combined Science (1-1).

Case Study 3

Student C entered long-term foster care in early childhood. From an early stage, they demonstrated high aspirations, expressing a clear ambition to attend sixth form at a local grammar school and eventually progress to university. The Virtual School played a pivotal role in supporting Student C's educational journey. From the outset, the Virtual School worked closely with the student's professional and care network to ensure their voice and views were central to planning. In line with Student C's aspirations, the Virtual School facilitated applications to two local sixth forms and a grammar school, securing conditional offers that aligned with the student's goals.

In preparation for GCSEs, the Virtual School strategically deployed Pupil Premium Plus funding to provide targeted in-school tuition and intensive academic interventions. These included bespoke support in core subjects. The funding was instrumental in enabling the school to deliver high-quality, personalised academic support during a critical phase of Student C's education. Beyond academic intervention, the Virtual School also ensured Student C had access to enrichment opportunities that broadened their understanding of higher education pathways. This included university taster experiences at Loughborough University and University College London (UCL), as well as the option to participate in an Easter GCSE Mathematics Revision School hosted by Imperial College London.

Student C achieved Grade 6 across all GCSE subjects, including English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, and Computer Science. These strong results secured a place at the sixth form at the local grammar school of their choice, representing a significant milestone in their educational journey and a testament to their resilience, ambition, and the collaborative support of their network—with strategic support provided by the Virtual School.

Case Study 4

Student D has been looked after since 2013 and has received consistent support from Southwark Virtual School throughout their educational journey. Over the years, Student D has benefited from a range of services, including targeted tuition and access to essential academic resources funded through the Pupil Premium.

Student D demonstrated a commitment to their learning and made good use of the academic support provided. They engaged in tuition sessions arranged by the Virtual School, which helped reinforce their understanding and confidence in key subjects. Additionally, Student D participated in information and guidance sessions, which supported their educational planning and personal development.

Student D achieved the following GCSE grades: **English Language – 4, English Literature – 5, Maths – 4, Combined Science – 5 and 4**. In total, they secured 8 GCSEs, with 5 of these being at grade 4 or above. These results reflect Student D's perseverance and steady progress, supported by a strong network of educational and pastoral care.

Looking ahead, Student D is exploring their post-16 options with a focus on continuing their education and building a pathway toward future aspirations. Their journey so far highlights the positive impact of sustained support and their own determination to succeed.

The Transition Process from Yr 11 to 12

114. Successful transitions from KS4 to KS5 are the result of joined up working between Virtual School KS4 Team, KS5 Team and social workers who work together with children, foster carers and education providers to secure transition to KS5.

115. A robust and detailed transition process was planned for the transition of year 11s to year 12 at the end of this academic year. Training was provided to Virtual School staff, Clinical Practitioners and Social Workers on how to best support young people transitioning between Secondary School and Further Education Colleges and Sixth forms.

Key Stage 5

116. The data presented below provides a snapshot of outcomes as of the end of the 2025 academic year. These figures are subject to change throughout the year due to factors such as young people entering or leaving the service, changing courses, transitioning into or out of education, employment or training (EET/NEET), or reaching the age of 18.

117. Key Stage 5 Cohort Information

Table 28: Year 12 and Yr13 Cohort 2024-2025		
Gender		
Male	78	70%
Female	34	30%
SEN/EHCP		
SEN Support	12	11%
EHCP	24	21%
Total SEN	36	32%
IN/OUT borough		
In borough	23	21%
Out of borough	89	79%

118. The table below shows the type of education settings our students in Year 12 and Year 13 attend, as of July 2025.

119. Majority of learners in years 12 and 13 attend a further education (FE) college. FE colleges are popular as they offer vocational courses alongside academic pathways in addition to English for speakers of other languages. Sixth form colleges provide for students wishing to pursue A' levels, in an extension of the school environment.

Table 29: Education Setting Type for the Key Stage 5 cohort 2024-2025

Type	Year 12	Year 13
FE college	48%	47%
6th form college	10%	5%
Alternative provision	0%	0%
Training/Employment	3%	0%
Youth Offending Institutions	1%	5%
NEET	38%	42%
No. of Young People	93	19

120. Supporting the NEET Cohort

- Any young person who is not in education, employment or training (NEET) will have a bespoke action plan. We aim to place young people who come into care in KS5 in an education or training provision with 14 days of the PEP meeting.
- Throughout the academic year 2024-2025 the 17-18 cohort had an EET figure of 60-80%. This figure will vary throughout the year due to an availability of courses, sourcing specialist provision and young people entering and leaving Care.
- Young people who enter care later in the academic year are more likely to be NEET as college places fill up with courses starting the following academic year. Despite FE colleges providing frequent start dates and new ESOL courses, larger numbers of UASC entering care in the latter half of the academic year are likely to be NEET for the remainder of the academic year and will start ESOL courses in September.
- The Virtual School are aspirational for all our children and young people and to this end we work particularly hard to ensure that those who are NEET are given every opportunity to access education or training and think about their longer-term goals and aspirations.

121. NEET Clinic

A weekly NEET clinic involves all staff in KS5. KS5 Education Advisors, alongside Education Advisors with strategic oversight for IAG across the Virtual School, come together with the Deputy Head to scrutinise the 'NEET list' and cases are addressed individually. Strategies are discussed and plans put in place to support a return to EET.

122. Action Plan

Each young person identified as NEET will have an action plan that is updated and maintained which will detail in chronological order the interventions, the support put in place and opportunities offered to enter education, employment and training. This will be summarised into a NEET transition passport for the 18+ Education, Training and Employment team in the 18+ service, so that when learners transition from the Virtual School specialists can see the main barriers, interventions and strategies already employed for those young people who have ended their time with the Virtual School as NEET. This is particularly useful for those who have remained long-term NEET or for those who regularly cycle between EET and NEET.

Table 30: NEET data for the Key Stage 5 cohort 2024-2025

Month	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Year 12	83%	76%	71%	71%	71%	72%	73%	70%	70%	70%	62%
Year 13	78%	71%	70%	70%	70%	73%	71%	69%	70%	69%	58%
Total	80%	74%	70%	70%	70%	73%	72%	70%	70%	70%	60%

123. Academic levels of Key Stage 5 cohort 2024-2025 as of July 2025

- The table below illustrates that most learners in years 12 and 13 are studying at Entry Level (23%). This figure is influenced by the high number of English for speakers of other languages who may be studying English for the first time.
- Students on L1 and L2 courses will be on a vocational pathway which also include Maths/English GCSE retakes. These courses will often be in the fields of construction, business and IT, health and social care and hair and beauty.
- Year 13 students on A' level/ Level 3 courses include both first and second year study at this level.

Table 31: Academic levels of Key Stage 5 cohort 2024-2025 as of July 2025

Level	Year 12	Year 13
Entry Level	22	4
Level 1 (L1)	8	0
Level 2 (L2)	8	4
Level 3/ A' Level (L3)	19	2
Employed	0	0
HMYOI	1	1
NEET	35 (38%)	8 (42%)
Total	93	19

124. Year 13 A level/ Level 3 Results Summary

Table 32: Achieving expected level

Achieving expected level	Yr 12	Yr 13	Total
ESOL all levels – Pass			
BTEC and Vocational courses – Pass	86% (50 of 58)	60% (6 of 10)	82% (56 of 68)
A Level – Grade C			

125. A' level Results and Destinations details A' level/ Level 3 results for exams taken in the 2025 exam series along with destinations for the coming academic year.

Results day 2025 yielded the following headlines:

- 7 students will be progressing onto university undergraduate courses this year.
- 2 students achieved A-C at A Level and are progressing to Russell group universities.
- 5 got their firm choice of university place i.e. their first choice of university.
- 1 female student is studying a STEM subject (Engineering) at a competitive university.
- 3 of the 4 A Level students achieved A-D at A Level.
- At Level 3 BTEC, 7 out of 8 students achieved Distinction*-Merit grades which is a superb achievement.

Table 33: Key stage 5 - Higher Education destinations 2024-2025

Student	Results	SEN	Destination
1	A Level English Literature A A Level History B A Level Religious Studies B		University of Edinburgh (Law with Sociology/Classics)
2	A Level Sociology A A Level History B A Level English Literature C		University of Durham-Law
3	BTEC Level 3 Engineering-DDM	SEN Support	University of Westminster-Software Engineering with Electronics
4	BTEC Level 3 Business-D* BTEC Level 3 Health and Social Care-Merit		Greenwich University-Early Years
5	A-Level English Literature-D A-Level History-D A-Level Psychology-D		Middlesex University-Law
6	Level 3 Extended Diploma Engineering-DMM		University of Brighton-Electronic and Electrical Engineering
7	BTEC Level 3 Performing Arts-DMM		The Liverpool Media Academy (LMA)-Musical Theatre.
8	BTEC Business Level 3-DDD		Full time employment (apprenticeship at professional football club)
9	Level 3 Travel and Tourism-M		Full time Retail employment
10	A Level Economics-E	SEN Support	Retaking ICT and Geography A Levels at a selective Sixth Form College.
11	T Level in Maintenance, Installation and Repair for Engineering and Manufacturing Level 3-Partial mark.	SEN Support	Destination to be confirmed-apprenticeship or employment.

126. Southwark Children in Care Year 13 A level/Level 3 Results

Caution should be applied when using the information for analysis purposes due to the small cohort sizes. Results were collected manually and Virtual School still awaiting some results.

127. Eleven Southwark Children in Care took Level 3 exams/qualifications. We can share the following results:

Student 1 achieved grades ABB and has secured a place at the University of Edinburgh-looking at Law/Classics or Sociology.

Student 2 achieved grades ABC. Secured place at Durham University to study Law.

Student 3 achieved grades Distinction, Distinction, Merit (DDM) in BTEC Level 3 Engineering. Secured a place at University of Westminster to study Software Engineering with Electronics.

Student 4 achieved a Distinction* Level 3 in Business; Merit in Health and Social Care Level 3 - secured place at Greenwich University to study Early Years.

Student 5 achieved A level grades DDD and is off to Middlesex University to study Law.

Student 6 achieved Distinction, Merit, Merit (DMM) in BTEC Level 3 Performing Arts-secured a place at The Liverpool Media Academy (LMA) to study Musical Theatre.

Student 7 achieved a Distinction, Merit, Merit (DMM)-student going to Brighton University to study Electrical Engineering

Student 8 is in full time employment (apprenticeship at professional football club). Achieved Distinction, Distinction, Distinction (DDD) in Level 3 BTEC Business.

Student 9 is in full time Retail employment. Achieved Merit (M) in Level 3 Travel and Tourism.

Student 10 achieved a Partial Pass in T Level in Maintenance, Installation and Repair for Engineering and Manufacturing Level 3.. Destination to be confirmed.

Student 11 achieved E in A Level Economics-repeating the second year of A Level Geography and A Level Computing at a selective Sixth Form College for Year 14.

Key Stage 5 Case Studies

Case Study 1

Student 1 achieved a **Distinction, Merit, Merit (DMM)** in **BTEC Level 3 Performing Arts** and successfully secured a place at a **specialist college and university centre to study Musical Theatre**—fulfilling a lifelong aspiration. This is a significant achievement, and Student 1 should be incredibly proud.

Throughout the course, Student 1 consistently demonstrated strong commitment and actively engaged with the support available. They participated in an outing organised by the Virtual School to attend a musical theatre performance, which further deepened their appreciation of the subject. Their involvement in extracurricular activities—such as performing arts clubs and choir participation—significantly enriched their learning experience and personal development.

During Key Stage 5, Student 1 was diagnosed with ASD and ADHD and was subsequently placed on the Additional Learning Support (ALS) register. As part of their support plan, they received exam access arrangements, including additional time where appropriate. The Virtual School Education Advisor provided guidance throughout the process of applying for an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment and assisted with the necessary documentation and provided further information on the educational support available to Student 1 at university. Despite these challenges, Student 1 demonstrated excellent progress in lessons, consistently exceeding target grades—an achievement clearly reflected in both their ongoing assessments and final results.

Case Study 2

Student 2 achieved impressive **A-Level results: Sociology (A), History (B), and English Language (C)**, and has successfully secured a **university place to study Law at Durham University with a Foundation Year**. This is a significant accomplishment. While they performed well overall and have accepted the university offer, subject teachers for English and History have recommended a remark of certain papers, which the Virtual School has kindly offered to fund.

Throughout the course, Student 2 demonstrated consistent dedication and made full use of the support available, including supplementary tuition provided by the Virtual School to aid progression in History and English.

Student 2 integrated seamlessly into Sixth Form life and became a valued member of the school community. In their leadership role as Head of House, they took responsibilities seriously—actively planning and speaking at various whole-school events. Subject teachers have noted Student 2's excellent verbal contributions in class discussions and their enthusiasm for debates, group work, and paired activities—all of which place them in a strong position for success in Higher Education and their chosen field.

Additionally, Student 2 completed work experience placements at several law firms, further supporting their career aspirations and providing valuable insight into the legal profession.

Case Study 3

Student 3 remained CME until mid-October 2023. A school place for Year 11 to meet EHCP needs could not be found, so full-time tuition was funded via an Education, Health and Care Plan. Student 3 engaged consistently with tuition and sat GCSE examinations in summer 2024, achieving **English Language (5), English Literature (6), Mathematics (3), Biology (4) and History (5)**.

In September 2024, Student 1 enrolled at a further education college to study Electrical Installation. Due to delays in the consultation process, special educational needs were not adequately supported. Student 3 was excluded during the spring term. An appeal was submitted by the Virtual School; however, the exclusion was upheld.

Despite setbacks, Student 3 remained committed to achieving in education. At each stage, the student listened to advice from professionals and carers and acted on guidance provided. Student 3 diligently requested study resources to support revision and exam preparation and used the summer holiday to independently research and identify a suitable progression route.

GCSE Mathematics was re-entered for Summer 2025. Tuition was arranged and funded by the Virtual School. Student 1 achieved **Mathematics (4)** and successfully enrolled on a Level 2 Motor Vehicle Fast Fit course.

Tutor reports throughout the tuition period indicated consistent academic progress and engagement. Student 3 demonstrated the ability to work independently and respond to feedback effectively.

Case Study 4

Student 4 remained on roll at a mainstream school but was unable to attend during Year 13 due to ongoing health-related absences and hospitalisation linked to a long-term medical condition. A school place with appropriate support could not be secured during this period.

Despite significant disruption to education during Year 12 and no formal provision in Year 13, Student 4 remained focused on academic goals. Student 4 independently followed a structured self-study plan, dedicating four hours daily to preparation for A Level examinations in Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics.

Tuition was arranged at the request of the Virtual School when an in-year school place could not be found in the spring term. Student 4 engaged consistently and demonstrated strong subject knowledge and progress. The tutor recommended entry for Year 12 A Level examinations based on sustained performance and commitment.

Student 4 requested to return to the mainstream school to sit Year 12 examinations. This was coordinated by the Virtual School, which approached the school and provided consent for the arrangement. Consultations took place with the support of the Virtual School, and Student 4 now plans to return to full-time education and commence Year 13.

Virtual School Priorities 2024-2025

128. Persistent absence remains our main priority for the 2024-2025 academic year. We aim to strengthen our response to concern around persistent absence. Through targeted casework, data analysis, early intervention and regular multi-agency panels to agree priority actions.

129. We intend to make all Southwark schools attachment aware schools. Support the development of CPD (Continuing Professional Development) to our Designated Teachers and social workers and school leaders, including attachment aware and trauma informed schools, by delivering a flexible and diverse training programme with an aim to improve inclusive practice, build capacity and reduce suspensions/ permanent exclusions.

130. In relation to the extended duties of the Virtual School Headteacher, we aim to promote the educational outcomes of children with a social worker. Work with early years settings, schools, colleges and social care leaders to create a culture of high aspirations that helps all children with social workers to make educational progress. [Promoting the education of children with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements: virtual school head role extension - GOV.UK](#)

131. To strengthen our approach and offering to our children in KS5 through evidenced base use of the new pupil premium funding for Post 16. Offering varied and well-rounded advice to young people on their post-18 destinations education/employment by forging relationships with apprenticeship providers, developing resources on how to apply for apprenticeships and offering workshops on apprenticeships at all levels. This will allow us to target young people taking traditional education routes but also specifically target support to young people who may prefer an alternative to traditional university pathways.

132. **Mental Health and Wellbeing Support**

- Given the high levels of need among CLA and children with a social worker, consider prioritising access to mental health services, school-based counselling, and trauma-informed pastoral care.

133. **Education Stability and Placement Matching**

- Work with social care to reduce school moves and improve placement matching, particularly for children placed out of borough or in care mid-year.

Agenda Item 10

Meeting Name:	Corporate Parenting Committee
Date:	22 October 2025
Report title:	Corporate Parenting Strategy 2026-2030 – update
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	N/A
From:	Helen Woolgar, Deputy Director of Children's Services – Safeguarding and Care

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. To note the contents of this report.
2. To agree the timeline for delivery of the new Corporate Parenting Strategy 2026-2030.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. Southwark's Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2025 was published in July 2021 following approval by the Corporate Parenting Committee. The strategy set a renewed vision for every child and young person in the care of the council, or who had left care, which was:

"We want all children and young people in Southwark to grow up in a safe, healthy and happy environment where they have the opportunity to reach their potential"

4. The strategy defined six strategic priorities:
 - **Supporting More Families to Safely Stay Together** – Ensuring all our children & families get the right help at the right time, and at the earliest possible opportunity. To make sure that every child is supported to safely thrive at home.
 - **Growing Up Safe and Independent in Society** - Giving all of our children the tools, skills, resources and support that they need to grow towards independence, and be protected from the threats and risks to them from an increasingly complex world.
 - **Health, Wellbeing, Education & Opportunity** - Marshalling the unique resources of the borough to ensure that every one of our children and young adults gets the support and advocacy they deserve and expect from an excellent parent.

- **Happy, Safe and Stable** – Making sure that everyone of our children has a say in where they live and who they live with. That they are safe and in permanent homes earlier, closer to home, and supported to remain there as long as they need to.
- **Identity & Belonging** - Giving all our children and young people the chance to learn about themselves, their history and identity, and to live with carers who understand and reflect their cultural identity. Providing every chance for our children to appropriately engage with their own families and personal history.
- **A Whole Borough That 'Cares to Care'** - Placing delivering for our children and young adults at the heart of everything the council and its partners do. Broadening the voice and experience of our children across all decision making, and making Southwark a truly Corporate Parenting Borough.

5. Building on the foundations of the existing vision and priorities, the council is working to develop the next iteration of the Corporate Parenting Strategy. We are looking to be bold and ambitious in our plans to develop services for children in care and care leavers for our 2026 to 2030 strategy.

6. The development of the new strategy follows the council's **Southwark 2030 Strategy**, launched in September 2024. We have begun work with our care-experienced children and young people to design the new **Corporate Parenting Strategy 2026 – 2030**. This will be developed in full collaboration with our children and young people ensuring their voice, lived experience and ambitions are at the heart of the next phase of our whole partnership corporate parenting delivery.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

7. Progress towards the development of the new strategy has included the initiation of the **Bright Spots Survey** for children and young people in our care and those who have left our care.

- Since 2013, Coram Voice has delivered the Bright Spots programme to help local authorities directly hear from the children and young people in their care and those who have left their care.
- The survey measures the well-being and quality of our children and young people's experience of care and the support they have received whilst in care and beyond.
- The tool provides a holistic insight into the views and experiences of our children and young people which is invaluable in the future development of our services and whole council approach to supporting the life chances of our children.
- The output of the Bright Spots surveys is due to be completed in March 2026.

8. As part of ongoing engagement with children and young people, **Speakerbox** - the council's Children in Care Council - have developed eight pillars which set out the priorities for care-experienced children and young people. These will be integral to the development of the new strategy:

- Education and Employment
- Non-discrimination
- Safety and Support Services
- Freedom of Expression
- Standards and Treatment in Care
- Voice of the Child
- Knowledge of Rights
- Health Services

9. Building on the results of the Bright Spots survey and Speakerbox's pillars, further detailed and meaningful consultation will be undertaken with our children and young people, and other key stakeholders to develop the strategy. This will include evaluation of the 2021-2025 strategy.

Delivery Timeline

10. The following delivery plan sets out the timescale for consultation and engagement and completion of the draft strategy by April 2026:

Action	Due By
Consultation and engagement with care-experienced young people	Oct – Dec 2025
Update on strategy development to the Corporate Parenting Committee	Feb 2026
Independent analysis of Bright Spots surveys completed	March 2026
Presentation of draft strategy to Corporate Parenting Committee for review and comment	April 2026

Policy framework implications

11. An updated and ambitious Corporate Parenting Strategy that recognises the shift in national policy context and builds capacity across the local public sector system to deliver outcomes for our children in care and care leavers, will increasingly serve the delivery of our Southwark 2030 Strategy.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

12. Successful delivery of a strategy to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers will have a significantly positive impact on the outcomes of one of the most vulnerable groups.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

13. In the development of the strategy, all care-experienced children and young people have an opportunity to share their views and contribute to the strategy. This will be done by working closely with colleagues

across the system to monitor participation in consultation and engagement.

Health impact statement

14. The health and wellbeing of our care-experienced children and young people will be integral to the development of the strategy and the strategy itself.
15. The Bright Spots survey asks directly about the mental and physical health and wellbeing of children and young people. Each young person aged 4-17 will have the support of a trusted adult to complete the survey.
16. Clinical service, commissioning and health colleagues will be integral to developing the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2026-2030 - particularly the Virtual Mental Health Lead for Looked After Children, Designated Doctor for Children Looked After and Care Leavers, and Designated Nurse for Children Looked After.

Climate change implications

17. There are no climate change implications associated with the development of the strategy.

Resource implications

18. There are no resource implications associated with the development of the strategy.

Legal/Financial implications

19. There are no legal or financial implications associated with the development of the strategy.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2025 Corporate Parenting Committee 22 July 2025 https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s99637/Appendix%201%20Draft%20Corporate%20Parenting%20Strategy%202021-2024.pdf	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Paula Thornton Paula.Thornton@southwark.gov.uk

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director for Safeguarding & Corporate Parenting	
Report Author	Poppy Laurens, Service Development Officer	
Version	Final	
Dated	8 October 2025	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director of Resources	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	13 October 2025	

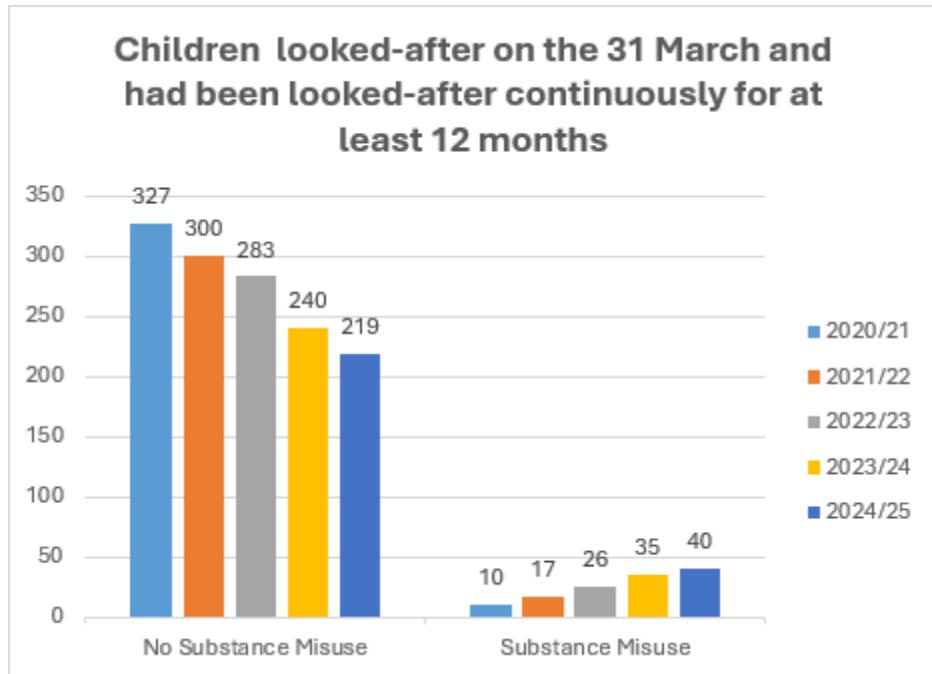
Meeting Name:	Corporate Parenting Committee
Date:	22 October 2025
Report title:	Short report – Substance misuse
Ward(s) or groups affected:	Children Looked After Southwark
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	N/A
From:	Dr Stacy John-Legere Designated Dr for Looked after Children, Southwark Joy Edwards Designated Nurse for Looked After Children and Careleavers, Southwark

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. Review parity of offer for Southwark CLA placed outside of the borough boundaries
2. In partnership with Public Health: Monitor emerging substance trends and adapt responses accordingly including acceptance of intervention
3. Improve data quality and validation across health and social care systems with benchmarking of Southwark's data against statistical neighbours and SEL boroughs
4. Further report on this item at a future Corporate Parenting Committee

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

5. This is a focused look at substance misuse reported for Southwark children in care requested following review of the trend noted below.
6. Over the last three years Southwark's percentage has increased from 8%, to 13%, and then most recently 15.4%. This is in comparison to 3% for England, 6% for statistical neighbours, and 5% for London.



7. 100% of those identified were offered an intervention; 30% received an intervention for 2024/25. This underpins the relative high percentage of CLA refuse intervention at point of offer.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

8. **SSD903 Definition of Substance Misuse:** The SSDA903 return defines substance misuse in looked-after children as the use of drugs, alcohol, or other substances in a way that is harmful or hazardous to health. This includes both legal substances (e.g., alcohol, tobacco) and illegal or psychoactive substances. The data collection focuses on identifying children who are known to misuse substances during their time in care.

9. **Use vs Misuse in Adolescents:** **Use** refers to any consumption of substances, including legal (e.g., alcohol, tobacco) or prescribed drugs. It may be experimental or recreational. **Misuse** occurs when substance use negatively impacts health, education, relationships, or safety. It includes regular use despite harm, polydrug use, and dependency.

10. Stages of misuse:

- Experimentation – infrequent, peer-influenced use
- Regular use – predictable patterns
- Risky use – physical, psychological, or social harm
- Dependence – compulsive use with withdrawal symptoms

11. Use of substances in children and young people aged below 18 years is recorded in the SSD903 return for Southwark as per the definition above.

National Picture (Ref: [Children and young people's substance misuse treatment statistics 2023 to 2024: report - GOV.UK](#))

General Population (England)

12. In 2023–2024, 14,352 children under 18 were in treatment for substance misuse. 87% reported cannabis use; 39% alcohol; 9% ecstasy; 8% powder cocaine. 80% began using substances before age 15. 49% had a mental health treatment need

Looked-After Children (England)

13. Significantly more likely to misuse substances than peers. Contributing factors include trauma, instability, poor mental health, and exposure to environments where substance use is normalized. Girls in care report higher rates of self-harm and sexual exploitation linked to substance misuse

Local Picture (Southwark)

14. Caution is required in interpreting data as absolute numbers of young people is relatively small, with small variations in number causing large percentage swings.
15. Summary information provided: main substance misuse in adolescents is cannabis. The overall numbers of adolescents accessing services have increased over the last 3 years with investment in the young person's offer as below.

Local Picture (Southwark CLA)

16. Case note review of the cohort included in the SSD903 return for 2024/2025 determined that cannabis was the most commonly used substance. An increasing proportion disclosed vaping; whilst use of nitrous oxide and cocaine were noted in a minority. The majority of young people reporting substance misuse were older teenagers 17 years old.
17. The commissioned offer from CGL is provided to young people resident within the borough boundary. A large proportion of Southwark CLA are placed outside of this; therefore, those requiring substance misuse services need to be referred onto their local service based on address.
18. Data quality issues were identified in the deep dive. The deep dive also demonstrated positively that the IHA and RHA assessments are holistic and young people are honest in the assessment – and it provides a good opportunity for discussion, signposting even though referrals not always accepted

Southwark Substance Use Local Offer provided by Change Grow Live - [Young People - Southwark | Change Grow Live](#)

19. **Universal offer** – provision of early intervention/prevention assemblies and workshops in schools and other services to increase CYP awareness of substance use and its harms and provide strategies for reducing risk and keeping safe
20. **CYP aged 10 – 17 years with drugs and / or alcohol support need** – confidential, non-judgmental support including advice and information about

substance use to help CYP to reduce risk and keep safe as well as tailored support to enable CYP to make changes to substance use and improve wellbeing.

21. **CYP aged 17 years and under affected by the substance use of another person (including family members / friends)** - confidential, non-judgmental support including advice and information about substance use to help CYP to reduce risk and keep safe as well as tailored support to enable CYP to manage the impact of someone else's substance use.
22. **Parents and families affected by someone else's substance use including the substance use of a child** – confidential support to help parents and families understand their child's substance use and how best to support them. The offer also includes support for the individual in their own right as a person affected by someone else's substance use.
23. **Professionals offer** – The service provides training and workshops on request from partner agencies to upskill staff on CYP substance use including how to refer to treatment. A service is also available for professionals seeking advice and guidance about a CYP's substance use that they are working with.

Southwark Substance Use Local Offer provided by CLA Health Service

24. Southwark CLA Health Service complete the IHAs and RHAs for the vast majority of Southwark CLA wherever they are placed, allowing for consistency in exploration of any substance use and offer of intervention.
25. Clinicians are routinely asking about substance use, and most young people disclosed use openly. Those identified were generally signposted to support services. The statutory health assessment process remains a key opportunity for early intervention.

Southwark Substance Use Local Offer provided by Southwark Children's Services

26. Embedded experienced substance misuse worker in social work care teams and co-ordination with CGL. They are supported by a dedicated CGL parent and family lead. Referral pathways in place to CAMHS and specialist services
27. Review at looked after children reviews – monitored by Independent Reviewing officer

Next Steps – update to be shared at future Corporate parenting

28. Uptake of intervention to be specifically reviewed and linked with harm reduction strategy. Consideration of transitional offer provided to Southwark Careleavers since majority identified are aged 17 years.
29. Developing and strengthening partnership working between CLA services and CGL for in borough CLA to improve rates of treatment uptake and to reduce harm and risk for CLA that do not wish to engage at the point of offer (eg.

provision of harm reduction information etc.

30. Specific review of offer provided to Southwark CLA resident outside of the borough boundaries
31. Additional data analysis to be presented with 2025/2026 Southwark CLA Health Annual Report – to include whole cohort deep-dive and case note analysis.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement:

Substance misuse among CLA has significant implications for community safety, cohesion, and long-term wellbeing. Young people affected by substance misuse are at increased risk of criminal exploitation, poor educational outcomes, and unstable housing. Addressing this issue through early intervention and integrated services is pertinent to improving outcomes.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

CLA are disproportionately affected by substance misuse due to socio-economic disadvantage, trauma, and systemic inequalities. Girls in care face heightened risks of self-harm and exploitation. A targeted response must consider intersectionality — including race, gender, disability, and economic status — to ensure equitable access to support. Improving data quality and service engagement will help reduce disparities and promote inclusion

Health impact statement

Substance misuse poses direct risks to physical and mental health, including dependency, injury, and long-term illness. The low intervention rate (30%) among identified Southwark CLA suggests missed opportunities for prevention and treatment. Strengthening health assessments, referral pathways, and trauma-informed care will improve outcomes. Enhanced collaboration between health and social care is essential to address unmet needs and reduce harm.

General guidance

32. NICE Quality Standard QS165
33. “From Harm to Hope” national drug strategy
34. Youth Offending Services screening and support

Climate change implications

35. None.

Resource implications

36. None.

Legal/Financial implications

37. None.

Consultation

38. Craig Benning, Head of Performance and Systems, Quality Assurance and Practice Development | Children and Families
39. Southwark Public Health: Donna Timms, Unit Manager – Drug & Alcohol Action Team, Integrated Commissioning | Integrated Health and Care | Southwark Council and Arrthi Pangayatselvan Consultant in Public Health Southwark Council
40. Southwark Health, Social Care and Education Forum

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

41. None.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

42. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/substance-misuse-treatment-for-young-people-2023-to-2024/children-and-young-peoples-substance-misuse-treatment-statistics-2023-to-2024-report>

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Health of CLA Annual Report	Southwark SELICB	Dr John-Legere

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director of Children and Families	
Report Author	Dr Stacy John-Legere, Designated doctor for Looked After Children	
Version	Final	
Dated	2 October 2025	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director, Resources	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		2 October 2025

Meeting Name:	Corporate Parenting Committee
Date:	22 October 2025
Report title:	Care Leavers Employability Pathway – Update
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	N/A
From:	Helen Woolgar, Deputy Director of Children's Services – Safeguarding and Care

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Committee note the content of the report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. In July 2025, a report was presented to the Committee on a cross-council Employability Pathway, which describes an enhanced offer to our care-experienced residents with access to council work experience, internships, apprenticeships and entry-level roles.
3. The Employability Pathway has been co-designed by care-experienced young people, alongside colleagues from Children's Services, Local Economy and HR/OD.
4. The Local Economy Team identified and connected the existing development activity to the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer and secured an additional £383,000 for 2025-26 to compliment the programme.
5. The council's senior leadership have agreed to minimum expectations on departments for support and participation in the programme.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Success so far

6. The Care Leaver Employability Support Steering Group has been mobilized as a programme oversight group with cross-council representation. This has become a productive group providing both support and challenge to the team to ensure system wide efforts to increase education, employment and training for care leavers are better understood and integrated into a single cohesive offer.

7. The Employability Pathway was presented at Southwark Council's Leadership Network by the Leaving Care team, Children's Rights Officers, and Service Development team. Leaders committed to the minimum expectations for participation from each department and over 60 employability opportunities have been submitted by colleagues across the organisation.
8. The Leaving Care and Service Development teams worked to design a month-long programme which incorporates work readiness support with practical work experience:

Period	Activities
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability skills week hosted by the Leaving Care service at Talfourd Place Care Leavers' Hub. A strengths-based approach has been taken, with sessions focusing on recognising and building upon strengths, understanding concerns and anxieties around work, and key workplace skills. • Southwark Council managers hosting work experience are invited to a 'Meet the Managers' session to meet the young people taking part. • Training session for Southwark Council managers and teams in supporting care-experienced young people in the workplace. These sessions have been supported by Personal Advisors, Children's Rights Officers and Clinical Practitioners. They have been well attended by council staff and provide an opportunity to ask questions in an open and honest space.
Weeks 2-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-week work experience placement at Southwark Council. • During these two weeks, each young person will have a mock interview and career conversation with their work experience lead. • At the end of the two weeks, each young person, their manager and Personal Advisor is invited to a celebration event to recognise their commitment and contributions.
Weeks 4+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following this, young people are supported with their next steps, this includes applying for a role, meeting with Job Centre Work Coaches, or preparing for further education/training.

9. In August, a pilot employability pathway was delivered with nine young people participating in a variety of activities, including the employability skills week, mock interviews, sector insight day and two weeks work experience in the council's Leisure service.
 - A manager who hosted work experience shared that "the young people I met were really inspiring and were driven to improve their lives. It felt great to help build their confidence."
10. In September, three young people participated in work experience in teams across the council - Housing Needs, Public Health, Electoral Services and the Mayor's Office. A further three young people secured places on the Civil Service Internship Programme.

- A young person shared that “the best thing about work experience was working with others, learning the role of the job and being able to do what they do. I have gained experience that I can put on my CV, and I want to do it again!”

11. In the [2025 Spending Review](#), central government stated “*At this SR, the government is extending funding for eight youth guarantee trailblazers and nine inactivity trailblazers, as set out in the Get Britain Working white paper. These trailblazers will test new approaches of supporting young people into employment and education, and bring together health, employment, and skills support to those who are inactive.*”
12. For programme management and future planning purposes, officers are expecting a similar level of funding of £383k for 2026-27. There is some reasonable expectation that there will be further funding for 2027-28, and 2028-29; however this has not been formally confirmed and so we advise normal caution when committing to any future spend or offer.

Priorities

13. The programme’s priorities for the rest of the 25/26 financial year are as follows:
 - To continue to track and monitor the progress of the pathway’s delivery and individual young people’s journeys.
 - To work with cross-council colleagues, including the Virtual Schools, to enroll more young people on the programme.
 - To support the programme of employment across the eight council teams who are hosting young people each month.
 - To maximise the support of cross-council volunteers to offer further employment opportunities, become Corporate Parenting Champions and continue to drive a culture change approach that increases system wide awareness, knowledge, skills and ability needed to support care leavers journey into sustainable employment.
 - To continue to engage with care-experienced young people to ensure their voices are front and centre to the programme’s design.
 - To work with colleagues in HR/OD to secure ring-fenced apprenticeships for care-experienced young people.
 - To develop an approach to the delivery of functional skills training.
 - To share ‘success stories’ from the programme within Southwark Council and at a regional level.
14. The delivery plan for year 2 of funding (26/27) will be informed by engagement with care-experienced young people, cross-council colleagues and partner organisations, and best practice from fellow Trailblazer funded Local Authorities.

Monitoring & Evaluation

15. The impact of the pathway and programme will be evaluated against the following measures:

- Achieving a 25% reduction in existing NEET care leavers
- A reduction in the incidence of children transitioning from care becoming NEET
- An increase in ring-fenced education, employment and training opportunities across the local area public and private sector.
- Delivering a re-design of existing local authority single departmental services into an integrated function across care, education and employment support to deliver a sustainable future state
- Care leavers self-reporting positive change in their support offer, and confidence in sustaining in education, employment and training
- Care leavers self-reporting positive change in the support and awareness within EET settings
- EET providers self-reporting greater confidence and skills in supporting care leavers access
- Reduction in Care leavers accessing out of work benefits

16. Trailblazer funding is held by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), with Central London Forward (CLF) and the Greater London Authority (GLA) acting as the regional coordinating group.

17. Formal reporting on the Trailblazer activity began in July 2025.

18. The Trailblazer programme for CLF is being evaluated by the Learning & Work Institute, who Southwark are met with individually for a scoping exercise in August.

19. Additionally, Verian, an independent social research company, are commissioned by the DWP to evaluate the whole programme of eight Youth Place-Based and nine Inactivity Trailblazers, as part of the Get Britain Working White Paper. Southwark will participate in these evaluations which begin in September.

Policy framework implications

20. The Care Leavers Employability Pathway aligns with the strategic priorities in the Corporate Parenting Strategy (2021-2025) to ensure that 'all children and young people in Southwark to grow up in a safe, healthy and happy environment where they have the opportunity to reach their potential'.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

21. Successful delivery of the Employability Pathway to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers will have a significantly positive impact on the outcomes of one of the most vulnerable groups in the borough.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

22. The Employability Pathway will be open to all care-experienced young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). This will be done by working closely with colleagues across the system to monitor participation in the programme.

Health impact statement

23. Clinical practitioner support has been secured to support delivery of the programme. This will include the delivery of workshops with young people, and involvement in the training session for council managers and teams on trauma-informed approaches.

Climate change implications

24. There are no climate change implications associated with this programme.

Resource implications

25. The Employability Pathway is delivered by an in-house multi-disciplinary team of existing council resources. Any additional support is enabled by the grant funding.

Legal/Financial implications

26. There are no climate change implications associated with this programme.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Care Leavers Employability Pathway Corporate Parenting Committee 22 July 2025 https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s128016/Employability%20Pathway%20-%20July%202025.pdf	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Paula Thornton Paula.Thornton@southwark.gov.uk

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Helen Woolgar, Deputy Director of Children's Services – Safeguarding and Care	
Report Author	Poppy Laurens, Service Development Officer	
Version	Final	
Dated	13 October 2025	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director of Resources	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	13 October 2025	

Meeting Name:	Corporate Parenting Committee
Date:	22 October 2025
Report title:	Corporate Parenting Committee – Work Plan 2025-26
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	Not applicable

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the corporate parenting committee agree the approach and work plan as set out in the report.
2. That the committee review and identify any further items for consideration in the work plan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Role and function of the corporate parenting committee

3. The constitution for the municipal year 2025-2026 records the corporate parenting committee's role and functions as follows:
 - a. To secure real and sustained improvements in the life chances of looked after children, and to work within an annual programme to that end.
 - b. To develop, monitor and review a corporate parenting strategy and work plan.
 - c. To seek to ensure that the life chances of looked after children are maximised in terms of health, educational attainment, and access to training and employment, to aid the transition to a secure and productive adulthood.
 - d. To develop and co-ordinate a life chances strategy and work plan to improve the life chances of Southwark looked after children.
 - e. To recommend ways in which more integrated services can be developed across all council departments, schools and the voluntary sector to lead towards better outcomes for looked after children.
 - f. To ensure that mechanisms are in place to enable looked after children and young people to play an integral role in service

planning and design, and that their views are regularly sought and acted upon.

- g. To ensure performance monitoring systems are in place, and regularly review performance data to ensure sustained performance improvements in outcomes for looked after children.
- h. To receive an annual report on the adoption and fostering services to monitor their effectiveness in providing safe and secure care for looked after children.
- i. To report to the council's cabinet on an annual basis.
- j. To make recommendations to the relevant cabinet decision maker where responsibility for that particular function rests with the cabinet.
- k. To report to the scrutiny sub-committee with responsibility for children's services after each meeting.
- l. To appoint non-voting co-opted members.

National and local context for care leavers

- 4. There is national momentum towards improving outcomes for care leavers. The government introduced 'Keep on Caring' strategy in 2016, increased council statutory duties to care leavers in the Children and Social Work Act in 2017, appointed a national Adviser for Care Leavers who produced a report in 2018, alongside the national launch of the Care Covenant. The council has responded to the various recommendations, for example by prioritising education, employment and training outcomes for care leavers in the Council Plan and developing the care leaver local offer as well as increasing service capacity for the extended personal adviser duties to 25.
- 5. Although much has been done to improve services and outcomes for care leavers, the council has an ambition to go above and beyond, by creating the best Leaving Care Service possible, by co-designing this with young people, learning from other organisations and trialling new ideas to test what works best.
- 6. In 2017 the council and Catch22 received funding from the DfE Social Care Innovation Programme to work in partnership to design and test new ways of working to support care leavers. The Care Leavers Partnership (CLP) works to improve outcomes for young people in Southwark by working across boundaries, reshaping the service delivery model, unlocking capacity in the community, and co-designing solutions. There are a number of strands that the CLP is working on to achieve our goals.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 7. The corporate parenting committee review and update the work plan each

meeting. Following the beginning of the municipal year 2019-20, and reflecting on the momentum towards improving outcomes for care leavers, the opportunity has been taken to review how the committee works and present proposals to refresh this in relation to: non-voting co-opted members; committee approach; and work plan and suggested agenda items.

Corporate Parenting Committee work plan – 2025-26

25 February 2026

- Speakerbox verbal update / annual report
- Annual independent reviewing officer report
- Adoption annual report
- Annual virtual head teacher's report
- Southwark homes for Southwark children update.

22 April 2026

- Speakerbox verbal update
- Southwark homes for Southwark children update
- Update on local offer on Kinship care.

To be allocated

- Exploitation, risk and harm and measures to break the cycle.

SpeakerBox

8. SpeakerBox, established in 2005, ensures that the views of looked after children and care leavers are used to influence decision making that affects their care and support particularly service planning and design. Representing children and young people between 8 and 24 years the group also provides a peer-to-peer networking support system for looked after children. The programme is operated independently and run by the young people themselves, although it is supported by the council's children services and councillors.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

5. The work of the corporate parenting committee contributes to community cohesion and stability.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact and health impact statement

6. Relevant issues will be addressed in the reports submitted to the corporate parenting committee.

Climate change implications

7. The work plan process for the committee has no direct implications.

Resource implications

8. There are no specific implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Minutes of meetings of Corporate Parenting Committee	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk
Web link: http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=129&Year=0		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director of Children and Families	
Report Author	Beverley Olamijulo/ Paula Thornton, Constitutional Team	
Version	Final	
Dated	29 September 2025	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Assistant Chief Executive – Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director of Resources	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	29 September 2025	

CORPORATE PARENTING DISTRIBUTION LIST (OPEN)**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2025-26**

NOTE: Original held by Constitutional Team; all amendments/queries to
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Councillor Natasha Ennin	1		
Councillor Mohammed Deen	1		
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